

North Central Valley
JACL/CSUS Oral History Project

Oral History Interview

with

Yoneo Ono

April 7, 1998
Sacramento, California

By Taeko Joanne Ono Iritani
for
Florin JACL

Consortium of JACL Chapters
Florin-French Camp-Lodi-Placer-Stockton
California State University, Sacramento
Special Collections/University Archives
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*California State University, Sacramento
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MISSION STATEMENT

To collect and preserve the historical record of the multigenerational experience of Japanese Americans and others who befriended them in the communities of the JACL Chapters of this Consortium. The books produced will enhance the CSUS/Japanese American Archival Collection housed in the California State University, Sacramento Archives for study, research, teaching and exhibition. This unique Collection of life histories provides a permanent resource for the use of American and international scholars, researchers and faculty, as well as a lesson for future generations to appreciate the process of protecting and preserving the United States Constitution and America's democratic principles.

PREFACE

This JACL/CSUS Oral History Project provides completed books and tapes of Oral Histories presented to the interviewed subjects, to the California State University, Sacramento/Japanese American Archival Collection, and to the local JACL Chapters. Copyright is held by the Consortium of JACL Chapters and California State University, Sacramento. Photocopying is limited to a maximum of 20 pages per volume. Photographic rights of the primary portrait of interviewees are held by Gail Matsui Photography.

This project will continue the mission of the Florin JACL which recognized the necessity of interviewing Japanese Americans: "We have conducted these interviews with feelings of urgency. If we are to come away with lessons from this historic tragedy, we must listen to and become acquainted with the people who were there. Many of these historians are in their seventies, eighties and nineties. We are grateful that they were willing to share their experiences and to answer our questions with openness and thoughtfulness." This same urgency to conduct interviews is felt by the other North Central Valley (Sacramento/San Joaquin Valley) JACL Chapters. There are still many stories that must be told.

The Oral Histories in the Japanese American Archival Collection relate the personal stories of the events surrounding the exclusion, forced removal and internment of civilians and permanent resident aliens of Japanese ancestry. There is a wide variety of interviews of former internees, military personnel, people who befriended the Japanese Americans, Caucasians who worked in the internment camps and others, whose stories will serve to inform the public of the fundamental injustice of the government's action in the detention of the Japanese aliens and "non-aliens", so that the causes and circumstances of this and similar events may be illuminated and understood.

The population of those who lived through the World War II years is rapidly diminishing, and in a few years, will altogether vanish. Their stories must be preserved for the historians and researchers today and in the future.

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER

Taeko Joanne Ono Iritani is the younger sister of the interviewed subject, Yoneo Ono. She is a Florin JACL member, President in 1996-97, Education Chair, and retired special education teacher with a master's degree from California State University, Bakersfield.

INTERVIEW TIME AND PLACE

April 7, 1998
The Iritani home
890 Sunwind Way
Sacramento CA 95831

TRANSCRIBING AND EDITING

Transcribing and word processing by Taeko Joanne Iritani
Editing of original manuscript by children of Yoneo Ono
Vicki Ono Spotts with whom Yoneo had lived in Redding CA
Steven Ono of Fresno CA
Madelyn Miyoko Ono Moore of Henderson NV
Editing and additional information by Taeko Joanne Iritani

PHOTOGRAPHY

The primary photograph was taken by Gail Matsui, JACL member, French Camp chapter.
Other photographs supplied by Vicki Ono Spotts from photographs collected by Yoneo, and by Taeko Joanne Iritani from photographs collected by their mother, Tome Ono

TAPES AND INTERVIEW RECORDS

Copies of the bound transcript and the tapes will be kept by the Florin Japanese American Citizens League and in the University Archives at the Library, California State University, Sacramento, 6000 J Street, Sacramento, California 95819.

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

Yoneo Ono (1925-1998) was born in Bakersfield, California on April 25, 1925, his mother's first birthday in the United States. His parents were Yoneshiro Ono (1900-1951) and Tome Suenaga Ono (1903-1989), immigrants from Fukushima Ken, Japan. Yoneo was followed by siblings Joe Minoru Ono born on December 10, 1926, Tomi Ono Monji born on February 8, 1928, Taeko Joanne Ono Iritani born September 21, 1929, and Takashi Ono born September 15, 1932.

Their father cleaned cars for the Santa Fe Railroad, was a gardener, and farmed rented land in Lamont, east of Bakersfield before World War II. The children attended Mountain View Grammar School in the Lamont area and Kern County Union High School in Bakersfield.

With the beginning of World War II, the signing of Executive Order 9066, the dusk-to-dawn curfew, the five-mile travel limit, and the impending forced removal of all people of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast, their father sold the farm equipment and animals, the vehicles, and furniture which could not be stored in the little house on the landowner's property. When the owner sold the farm, he moved all the stored belongings from the little house to the Japanese Methodist Episcopal Mission Church in Bakersfield.

The family left on May 25, 1942 by train from the Santa Fe Depot in Bakersfield to Parker, Arizona and on to Poston Camp I on the Colorado River Indian Reservation. Their address became Block 19, Barrack 9, Apartments C and D. Two rooms, 25' by 20', were assigned. Father, mother, sisters and youngest brother lived in one room, and Yoneo, Joe, and Susumu Konno, both parents' cousin, his wife Hanaye and daughter Kiku lived in the other room.

Yoneo obtained a job during the first summer in Poston as an orderly at the hospital, having first assisted in cleaning the buildings to make them usable by the medical staff. He related his experience in delivering a baby at age 17 while on that short-handed staff. During his midnight shift, he had much time to read, and borrowed books on philosophy, sociology, anthropology, psychology, etc. and found new areas to explore. During his second summer, he sought to work on the Sociological Research team of Dr. Alexander Leighton and became further exposed to new areas of study.

Yoneo graduated from Poston High School in 1944, attended a summer session at Yale, and enrolled at the University of Connecticut at Storrs. He obtained a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Bachelor of Science in Horticulture. His father and brother Joe had started the Evergreen Nursery in Bakersfield in 1947, and Yoneo obtained a contractor's and landscape architect's license later by which he won the contract for work at the newly established Edwards Air Force Base in eastern Kern County.

Yoneo's areas of involvement included the American Friends Service Committee Peace Education group in 1948 in Orange County, and volunteer program director at the Carver YMCA in an extremely economically depressed area in Bakersfield. He taught courses at Bakersfield Community College, Fresno City College and California State University, Fresno, and he

wrote a column for *The Bakersfield Californian* newspaper. He worked for the County of Kern and then the City of Bakersfield planning department from which he and many others were fired. He then worked as associate planner for the City of Fresno in Fresno County. After his retirement in 1984, he opened a design group business by which he helped young people to establish themselves in the field.

Yoneo was a member of professional groups including American Institute of Certified Planners, the American Society of Landscape Architects, California Irrigation Institute, and American Society of Public Administrators. Community groups included National Association for the Advancement of Colored People [NAACP], Fresno Community Mental Health Advisory Board, Fellowship of Reconciliation, the YMCA and the American Friends Service Committee.

His main area of volunteer involvement in Fresno was the Self Help Enterprises program which built houses for migrant workers and was based in Visalia in Tulare County. He helped to found the Fresno County group. In 1978, he helped found the Rural Community Assistance Corporation, now spread to ten western states, Alaska and Hawaii. The RCAC established the "Yoneo Ono Award" in 1984 "to recognize volunteers who help make lasting improvements in the quality of life of their rural communities."

Yoneo was married to Frances Eveline Holden in 1952 in Bakersfield having met her in Connecticut at a NAACP gathering. They had three children: Steven Mead, Madelyn Miyoko, and Victoria Jeanne. They lived in Bakersfield until 1963 when he moved the family to Fresno.

The family is now scattered. Yoneo lived in Redding, California with daughter Vicki, her husband Chuck Spotts and son Nathan after his retirement from the City of Fresno and medical limitations. Frances lives in a board and care home in Fresno. Son Steven and Ellen live in the former family home in Fresno. Daughter Miyoko, her husband Robert Moore, and children Colin and Kikumi live in Henderson, Nevada.

Yoneo's blood pressure has been a problem since he was in Poston, and over the years he had strokes, bypass surgeries, and other emergency medical situations. He always took these medical setbacks in stride.

After attending the RCAC conference in Seattle, Yoneo spent over a week at the home of his sister Taeko Joanne Iritani in Sacramento at which time this oral history interview was conducted on April 7, 1998. He returned to Redding in good spirits on Thursday, April 9, had a heart attack on Sunday, and died at the hospital on Thursday, April 16, 1998.

Yoneo had left simple directions for his family following his death. He wanted no funeral, only a memorial potluck dinner party at which people were to enjoy themselves. Memorial potluck parties were held in Redding and Fresno at which people ate, became acquainted, shared memories, and enjoyed themselves. As one young man described Yoneo and his vast knowledge of many subjects, "He was a renaissance man." Yoneo would have enjoyed these parties, and probably would have held long discussions on many, many subjects with many, many people.

This Oral History interview of my brother Yoneo Ono was conducted on April 7, 1998 at my home in Sacramento, California. On Thursday, April 9, he returned to his home in Redding, California. The following Sunday, he suffered a heart attack and died on Thursday, April 16, 1998. A memorial potluck dinners which he had requested was held in Redding, and was followed by a gathering in Fresno on what would have been his seventy third birthday. I was able to complete the transcription of the audio tapes and gave a printed copy to his daughter Vicki. She edited and made personal comments, and mailed it to her siblings Steve and Miyo. These comments by the three children were added to the original manuscript. I am glad we followed this procedure. These personal comments of his children help us to see the fuller picture of the life of my brother, Yoneo Ono.

Taeko Joanne Ono Iritani

Florin JACL member

[Session 1, April 7, 1998]

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

IRITANI: I am Joanne Iritani with the North Central Valley CSUS and JACL¹ Oral History Project. Today's date is April 7, 1998. This is Tape 1, Side A. I am interviewing my oldest brother, Yoneo Ono, at my home, 890 Sunwind Way, Sacramento. Because he is my brother, I have knowledge of our background, however, I will attempt to make this interview an account of his history and not mine. I decided to do Yoneo's oral history during his visit at my home. He is here following his attendance at the Rural Community Assistance Corporation [RCAC] Conference in Seattle. Yoneo was there to present the "Yoneo Ono Award" to worthy volunteers within rural communities of ten western states, Hawaii and Alaska.

And now, Yoneo I just want you to talk about your family background, your siblings, and anything that you remember that our parents had told you about their own childhood. You could start with them.

ONO: Okay. I was born on April 25, 1925 on my mother's birthday.
[Mother's name was Tome Suenaga Ono.]

¹ California State University, Sacramento and Japanese American Citizens League

IRITANI: Her first birthday in America.

ONO: Her first birthday in America. And I was born in Bakersfield, California. She just got over here the year before. One of the few last ones to enter the United States from Japan before the Exclusion Act [of 1924]. My father was here earlier in 1918. [Father was born Yoneshiro Ono and added the name George in America.] His father was living in the United States working in the . . . was it Santa Fe railroad? [Grandfather was Yonesaburo Suenaga Ono.]

IRITANI: Railroad. Santa Fe.

ONO: He was working in the railroad at Santa Fe [in Bakersfield]. And my father was what they call a *Yobiyose*, which means a son that was called over to this country at the time of the Gentlemen's Agreement. Then he went to school in the United States from first grade to sixth grade after which he didn't go any further. But in Japan he did complete his eighth grade and my mother completed her sixth grade in Japan. But my mother never went to school in the United States.

My father was also very athletic. In fact, he played baseball, basketball, and track with the younger Niseis of that period which would have been the children born to the earliest immigrants to this country. And he also played tennis. In fact, in tennis, he was in a few tournaments with Caucasians in Kern County in the 1920s, and I don't remember much about that. The only reason I

know about the tennis, I was holding the tennis racket when I was about two years old.

IRITANI: We have a picture of that.

ONO: And we have a picture of that tennis racket and I'm holding it. Then my. . . . Within the family, there were five of us. Three boys and two girls. The boys were Joe Minoru Ono which was [born] eighteen months after me. And then there was Tomi who was born in February. Joe was born in December. Tomi was born in February. And then Taeko was born in March . . . [Taeko is the interviewer's given name.]

IRITANI: September 1929.

ONO: September which was a year later.

IRITANI: So Joe was born in 1926.

ONO: Tomi was '28.

IRITANI: And I was '29.

ONO: '29. Then the youngest one Takashi who was born when we were on the farm, and that was in 1932.

IRITANI: And the farm was in Lamont.

ONO: Lamont, California. Right. Which is southeast of Bakersfield. We all went to school at Mountain View Elementary School. . .

IRITANI: Before we get to Mountain View, you lived in Bakersfield. . .

ONO: For a short period.

IRITANI: With our parents. We don't remember any of that experience.

ONO: Well, I remember we lived on, I think it was Sixth Street in Bakersfield in a rented house. And before that, I think. . . . No, then after that I lived out there in Roosevelt [School] area which is to the south, southeast of Bakersfield. I was about five years old. But I can still remember some of the things that happened to me when I was out in Tupman [a very small oilfield town southwest of Bakersfield].

IRITANI: How old were you when you were in. . . when we moved to Tupman? Because . . .

ONO: We moved from Tupman to Bakersfield in 1929 when the depression hit.

IRITANI: From Tupman to Bakersfield?

ONO: Right. In 1929.

IRITANI: Oh. I didn't know that. Okay.

ONO: Yeah. Because you were just born.

IRITANI: Right. I was born that year. And then do you remember when the family moved out to Lamont area?

ONO: Yes, I definitely remember that.

IRITANI: You were about how old then?

ONO: I was seven at that. . . no, I was six, still six at that time when we moved out there. That was 1932. Then we had the flood of Lamont in the winter of '32.

IRITANI: Oh, you remember that?

ONO: Oh, yes. I remember that flood because I can remember the water was right up to our threshold.

IRITANI: Oh, really?

ONO: It didn't quite come into the house. It was just right there. And I can remember seeing the door. . . opening the door and looking right straight out. And there was the water.

IRITANI: Do you remember any of the conversation of our parents in moving from Tupman to Bakersfield, out to Lamont?

ONO: No, I don't remember any of the conversations.

IRITANI: None of that. Not the background. Okay. Children don't get in on those conversations. Okay.

ONO: I can remember when my father was working for [Mr. Tsunezo] Kinoshita's.

IRITANI: Oh, I don't know anything about that. When was that?

ONO: That was in 1930, '31, or somewhere around there. He worked for the Kinoshita's.

IRITANI: While he was in. . . well, that was while he was in Bakersfield.

ONO: Right. And that was so he could learn a little about how farming is done.

IRITANI: Oh-h. Okay.

ONO: Because he actually doesn't come from a farming family.

IRITANI: Right.

ONO: He comes from a more or less a town. . . village family.

IRITANI: Right.

ONO: And, I can remember that portion, but I can't remember. . . . All I remember is the Kinoshita's had asparagus and had peaches. I think it was stone fruit and that's about it. I don't know whether they grew vegetables or not. They may have grown vegetables, because the [George] Tanigakis who were next door to them to the south, he grew vegetables. So I would guess Kinoshitas also had some vegetables. And that's where he gained a lot of his farming experience in that one year. Before that he was working for Standard Oil.

IRITANI: And he was the gardener.

ONO: He was the gardener for Standard Oil in the main office in Oildale. And then before that. . . I think in 1925, in 1929, when he first came to Bakersfield, I think he first worked for Tanaka. At the Evergreen Nursery, that's where. . .

IRITANI: At the Bakersfield Nursery.

ONO: The Bakersfield Nursery. Right. I think that's where he learned something about the nursery business. And I found one of his cards, his calling card, that had the words "Landscape Architect" on it. In fact, I think that's what he called himself at that time. In his gardening.

IRITANI: At that time, they didn't need the same certification.

ONO: Nor did you need the training or the education at that time. All you had to do was call yourself that. In fact, that law was not

passed in the State of California until 1953. That's when it was started.

IRITANI: Oh, really? Oh my. Okay, now, do you have any other recollections of your childhood before we went off to . . .

ONO: I can remember the hills of Tupman. I can remember the oil wells. And I can remember the big belts that I went under the oil wells. I saw them running. Kind of dangerous position to be in. But, I can also remember the tractor working on the front street, grading it and putting the asphalt down.

IRITANI: And you started kindergarten while you were in Tupman?

ONO: No, no. I started kindergarten in Roosevelt School when we were in Bakersfield. And then we moved. And there was no kindergarten in Mountain View School, so therefore I was out for a while. Then I went to Mountain View School. Started first grade. But all I can remember about kindergarten, one of the major things I can remember about kindergarten. . . I had to go to the toilet, and I didn't know how to ask to go to the toilet. So I just ran out and went.

IRITANI: Because our. . .

ONO: Because of the language difficulty.

IRITANI: Language was strictly Japanese at home.

ONO: Japanese, right.

IRITANI: Okay, then when we got over to the Lamont area. . .

ONO: The Lamont area, then I. . .

IRITANI: You attended Mountain View School.

ONO: Mountain View School. Only thing I can remember about that is, I had a B in art and F in everything else.

IRITANI: Because of the language?

ONO: Because of the language. I had no language capability. Then what I can remember about learning the language is my father sitting right next to me at my side, and both of us reading the books together. In other words I would read the book and he would correct me as I would read. Although his pronunciation of the word was bad, he was able to read the book.

IRITANI: Yeah, he always had his accent.

ONO: Very, very strong accent.

IRITANI: But he was able to read because he. . .

ONO: In fact, he could read the newspapers and everything else.

IRITANI: Right. Now you're into grade school, Anything. . .

ONO: From the second year of first grade I passed into second grade because I was able to read. The major thing in elementary school that I can remember was, for instance, when I was in the fourth grade, I did a mural, you know a mural in the back of the school on. . . I can remember doing the one on desert scenes with camels and so on. This was, I think, a Christmas scene. And, I took it over from the teacher. The teacher was doing it, and I said, "Hey, you don't do it that way," and I took it away from the teacher.

IRITANI: Oh, you told the teacher.

ONO: Told the teacher how it should be done, and so she gave it to me and I did it. In fact, I think I was in the third grade, when one of my drawings went up to the State Fair.

IRITANI: Oh, it did?

ONO: Uh huh. And I think I won an award. A second place or something like that from the State of California. But the thing that was interesting about that drawing was the pig going to the market or something, and the drawing of the pathway was in perspective, which was very unusual

IRITANI: Unusual for a child. And I never have thought of you as an artist.
[Laughter]

ONO: Then, in the fifth grade, I think I got out of spelling and quite a few class, because I did the poster for the school. The big poster on the bulletin board. It took the whole bulletin board to draw the picture of the presentation we were supposed to have, or something like that. I also played football. I played most of the sports. In fact, because I was bigger than most of the students. . . for my age, in fact at the age of twelve I was five seven [5' 7"] which was very unusual. So I quite often was the biggest one there. Played most of the sports and athletic activities were very easy for me. Another very interesting time I had was. . . when I was in seventh grade, we had a test. Music test. And as I remember that music test, the test was actually a music. . . in fact they had some notes written down and we had to figure out what

song each series of notes meant, and so on. And in fact on that test, I made the level of eleventh grade or twelfth grade in high school. And from that point on, my music grade just jumped. Instead of a B it became much higher.

IRITANI: Because you understood what the notes were doing.

ONO: I was able to read the notes. I don't know where I got that learning, but I learned it some place. Also during grade school, my [inaudible] interest was going into aeronautical engineering. So I read quite a few books. . .

IRITANI: Now how did you think in those terms, because certainly there were no role models for you.

ONO: No, there were no role models, but the thing is, what I read was. . . one book I read was [Charles] Lindbergh's *W e*. And then I read quite a few of the books on Commodore Perry. No, no. Not Perry, but [Richard E.] Byrd who was the person who flew over the North Pole and South Pole, and all that stuff. I read these adventure books and that's what got me interested in that field. In fact, back in the thirties, I knew most of the planes that were manufactured at that time. I knew the dimensions of them. I knew how they were structured. I knew how the plane was constructed and everything.

IRITANI: And you were making the model planes at that time.

ONO: I was making model planes, right.

IRITANI: I can still picture some of the balsa wood.

ONO: Then another thing, at that time, in order to understand the math that was in some of the books. . . because they got books that were too technical for me actually, so in order to try to understand the math, I learned a little bit about trig and a little bit about this. . .

IRITANI: About what grade were you in?

ONO: I was a seventh grader.

IRITANI: You were still in seventh grade then. Getting into the math. . .

ONO: Math, so I could understand. . .

IRITANI: You were not getting it in school.

ONO: No. They wouldn't have it in school. I did it all on my own. In fact the whole field of science was fascinating to me. Then I read the encyclopedia. We had the encyclopedia, *World Book*. Remember?

IRITANI: Right. *Book of Knowledge*.

ONO: *Book of Knowledge*. Yeah. That's right.

IRITANI: A used set of *Book of Knowledge*.

ONO: And I read a lot of those. Which was interesting. Curious. Then I went to [Kern County Union] high school. In high school, because my English was so bad. . . in fact my English was actually acquired from the kids that I grew up with, and most of them were born and raised in Oklahoma.

IRITANI: Oklahoma, Arkansas migrants.

ONO: And that's what I spoke like. Yeah migrant work. And then when I went to high school. . . the first year in high school I had to

take what they called dumb-bell English. And that was to correct my English.

IRITANI: Right.

ONO: And then after that I was getting into the regular English courses.

IRITANI: And you were actually in high school two years before we went into Poston.

ONO: Yeah. Freshman year [Grade nine] and the sophomore year [Grade ten]. In the freshman year, the first thing was that I became the representative of the freshman class in the high school student government, which is very unusual.

IRITANI: Yes. Do you remember how you were selected?

ONO: I was selected from my social science class, because it [the student council] was tied in with the social science classes. In the social science class I was selected to become the student representative. . .

IRITANI: Were you selected by the classmates?

ONO: By the classmates. Right.

IRITANI: And what's unusual about this as far as I'm concerned, is that you attended a little rural school.

ONO: That's right. Not a city school.

IRITANI: And Bakersfield City Schools had many, many junior high schools. It wasn't just a one junior high school feeding into this big high school. This was the only high school at that time.

ONO: In Kern County.

IRITANI: Right. And so, it was. . . I remember seeing your book. . . I mean your picture in the yearbook about that. And I wondered about that myself.

ONO: Yeah, I always feel. . . in fact, I was the only one that I know of who was from outside of the area.

IRITANI: Outside of the city [of Bakersfield] itself.

ONO: How I got elected, I have no idea.

IRITANI: You don't know. You talked enough. [Laughter]

ONO: Whatever it was, they selected me. Maybe it was because I was talking so much, or whatever.

IRITANI: Yeah. [Laughter] Despite what you say was the Oklahoma accent.

ONO: Right.

IRITANI: Anything else during your high school two years there?

ONO: In the sophomore year, in fact within that period, most of my courses were quite interesting, because I would take auto mechanics, which was not standard. I would be taking drafting which was not standard. You know, usually you don't go into that side. . . at the same time I was taking in the first two years I was taking algebra. I couldn't take it in my freshman year because I didn't qualify to get in. And I made A in algebra with no problem anyway, because I always knew how to do most of that.

IRITANI: But you were not qualified to get in?

ONO: That's right.

IRITANI: Why?

ONO: Because anybody who was . . . who had to go through the remedial English was considered, "Hey, you're not college-bound". . .

IRITANI: College prep.

ONO: So, therefore, there were a lot of courses I couldn't get into the first semester. First year. But, the second year, when I made the decision as to what courses I was going to take or not take, then I was into a lot of courses that. . . because they were directing me towards trade school type of situation.

IRITANI: You had already decided. . .

ONO: That [trade school] was not what I was going to do.

IRITANI: . . . That was not your course.

ONO: Uh uh. So, therefore, my sophomore year I took algebra, I took a lot of the courses that were never really taken by. . .

IRITANI: By the sophomore?

ONO: Well, usually sophomore year they'll take the courses, but most of the algebra courses were given on the freshman year, not in sophomore year.

IRITANI: Oh, I see.

ONO: But in the sophomore year I took my first freshman English. In sophomore year instead of the freshman year, because I had to take the other course in order to correct my English. But it was very, very useful, because that English [the dumb-bell English course], they went into such things as outlining the sentences; structuring the sentences; parts of the sentences; studying how the

spelling techniques are handled; all the rules and how the rules are broken; and all that stuff. And in fact, that had more effect on my taking the civil service exam later than anything else, because when I was taking the civil service exam in the city of Bakersfield, one of the things that they did was, they had a whole paragraph and you had to analyze the paragraph and know what it said. And I knew where the errors were and were not and so on. And I could structure the whole thing out in my head and get the correct answer.

IRITANI: And that was based on what you learned. . .

ONO: Based on my freshman English.

IRITANI: Your freshman dumb-bell English.

ONO: Right.

IRITANI: Very good. Okay. To get back to your sophomore year, was there anything significant to you that you think you did, that year?

ONO: No, the sophomore year, I was kind of the typical student, although I still had the courses like drafting and so on which was technical courses. That was actually a training course type of thing. I also took machine shop in my sophomore year. I had art metal. I had cold metal. And also the forge type of activity. I learned how to handle all those equipment. In fact, there was in my freshman year that I made a piece for the washing machine Mom had. This little gear broke and I made it in the. . .

IRITANI: Made the replacement part?

ONO: Made the replacement part for her.

IRITANI: Uh, we didn't talk about the distance that you had to travel to go to high school.

ONO: Oh, to high school? Oh, I had to be out there at the bus stop which was half a mile's walk from the house to the bus stop. I had to be at the bus stop at 7:00 o'clock in order to get to the school at 8:00 o'clock.

IRITANI: And the bus picked you up every morning.

ONO: And the bus picked us up every morning. Usually the bus trip was one hour.

IRITANI: One hour to school.

ONO: And the distance in mileage was only about sixteen miles.

IRITANI: So were you able to participate in any after school. . .

ONO: No. The only thing I was able to participate in was in school. For instance, I went out for track, but I wasn't able to jump far enough. I broad jumped 19' 6", but that wasn't. . .

IRITANI: Not good enough?

ONO: Not for a class B. You had to be up in the 20s, which you find out in records all over the place that most of the colleges were jumping only in the 20s.

IRITANI: Oh, really?

ONO: Bakersfield was really unusual.

IRITANI: For depth in the track. That area of track.

ONO: At that time, yeah. In fact I think the Bakersfield broad jump record was 26 feet and something at that time.

IRITANI: I want you also to tell. . . you mentioned the other day about your boy scouting. What years was that?

ONO: Well, I went into scouting. . . I started into scouting I think it was in 1937 or was it '38.

IRITANI: How old?

ONO: I think it was '38 because I was 13, and Joe was 12.

IRITANI: And you were both in the scout troop.

ONO: We were both in the same troop. Uh huh.

IRITANI: From school?

ONO: From school. This was. . . we were still in elementary school at that time. And I stayed in scouting till. . .

IRITANI: While you were in high school?

ONO: I was still in scouting while I was in high school. Yes.

IRITANI: Do you remember some of those activities?

ONO: Yeah, we. . . the biggest activity I could remember is all the camping. We were up at Posey Flats one time camping. And I could remember that. And we were at Yosemite one time camping and the tricks that we played.

IRITANI: On?

ONO: On the. . . it was Don Clark at that time.

IRITANI: Oh, okay. That was your leader?

ONO: Yeah, he was one of the trustees or whatever it is, he was on the scout. . .

IRITANI: School board?

ONO: No, he wasn't on the school board. He was on the scout committee.

IRITANI: On the scouting committee. Okay.

ONO: In fact, our patrol. . . Bobby Clark was also on the patrol. I was the patrol leader and Bobby Clark was assistant patrol leader and. . . In fact, in scouting just as soon as I turned fourteen, I became eligible to become patrol leader and I got into patrol leader. Generally, every time I became eligible to become something, I usually got the position, which was very interesting because a lot of other people could have gotten that position.

IRITANI: And of course, we were the only Japanese out there [with school age children.]

ONO: We were the only Japanese family in the whole area. And I can remember in 1939. . . was it '39? No. It was '39 I was driving already by that time, picking up all this junk iron and. . .

IRITANI: Iron?

ONO: Junk iron. Yeah. Scrap iron.

IRITANI: Oh, really?

ONO: That's how we made our funds in order to buy all the uniforms and all the pots and tents and everything. We were possibly the richest patrol in that group. Besides the fact that Don had a cotton

farm and he was the owner of a cotton gin, Don Clark. So therefore, one time I can remember going out and picking cotton. The whole patrol. He says, "Anything you pick, I'll gin it for you. It's your money." And that's how we supplemented our own money. So we had one of the richest patrols. And we traveled a lot. In 1940, we went to the Treasure Island World's Fair [in San Francisco Bay]. Spent the whole day there.

IRITANI: How did you get there?

ONO: We went on the train. The train started out from Bakersfield, all the patrols, all the scout troops in Kern County. . .

IRITANI: Oh, all together?

ONO: All together, yeah. Anybody who paid the fee to go on that trip was there. And our patrol, a hundred percent of our patrol went because we paid it out of the patrol fund, which was a little different than most people. Most people, the family had to pay. And then we got in the train, went overnight. . . I can remember getting to Oakland. And when we got to Oakland, we got off the train, walked down to the hotel, went into this great big dining hall, and they served us pancakes. And some of the guys made mention, "Now we got our introduction to the food, when are you going to bring the food around, because all we got was three pancakes."

IRITANI: Oh, that wasn't enough for them.

ONO: That wasn't enough for all of us.

IRITANI: Young growing boys.

ONO: Right. But we had fun. Then from there, we got onto the boat. . . the ferry went to the island, got off, and we were on our own. Nobody with us and we went through the various things. And the major thing I can remember about the Golden Gate was there was. . .

[End Tape 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

ONO: [TheWorld's Fair exhibit featured] the future of automotive industry, and the major thing that I can remember about the future of automobile industry was that in the Ford they had a display of the crankshaft and the counter balance in the crankshaft, which was new to me, because the old crankshaft, like in the Ford A's, model A's, the crankshaft was just bent, and that's it. They were not counter balanced. But they were just starting to counter balance the crankshaft so the cars would run smoother. Another thing that was interesting at that period, they were just starting to develop what they called floating. . . in fact, I think it was Chrysler that had the floating engine, which meant all they did was to put a damper in between the engine connection to the shaft and all that stuff.

IRITANI: So, you did see Chrysler there, too?

ONO: I think I must have seen Chrysler.

IRITANI: You remembered that connection. So what was the most interesting to you were these engines?

ONO: Automotive engine stuff and airplanes. That was the direction I was always looking towards. And the thing is that on the airplane, seeing the DC 17. . . not DC, but, B-17. It was a real thrill, because I heard about the B-17, I also read about it, and how it's built being a fortress with all its gun ports and so on. But they did not have a stinger, in other words they didn't have a tail gun. The tail gun was put in after the war started.

IRITANI: So most of that information you got from the papers or how did you?

ONO: Oh, a lot from reading.

IRITANI: But to be up-to-date?

ONO: Up-to-date, you just read the flying magazine. They had a magazine that was called *Flying Magazine*. You could read those.

IRITANI: At the school library?

ONO: At the county library.

IRITANI: You were not taking the. . .

ONO: No, I wasn't taking it. I got it at the library. In fact, most of the books I checked out of the county library. As I remember the number was 926. Within the 926. . .

IRITANI: Right, where ever. [Chuckle] After you came back, of course, school continued for you. Also during your childhood, we attended Japanese [language] school and Sunday school.

ONO: Japanese school was on Saturday. And usually that was Saturday morning and not Saturday afternoon. It 'll go a little bit in the afternoon, but that's about it.

IRITANI: And do you remember what you learned, any part of that, what that experience was like for you?

ONO: Well, there are some parts of it I can remember. I can remember that in Japanese school we went through Book 1, Book 2, Book 3. I think I went as far as Book 4 or 5. Somewhere around there. In summertime what they wanted us to do was to write a diary everyday, in *Nihongo* [the Japanese language] and I can remember on my notebook, with a pencil I drew a picture, yeah, I drew a picture of a lake that I saw someplace, I don't remember where it was, with a mountain, a lake and so on.

IRITANI: About what age were you there?

ONO: At that time I was already around about twelve, thirteen, fourteen. Somewhere around there. But, it was in the fifth grade or sixth grade, I also had another award that was won at the State Fair in art.

IRITANI: Oh, another art piece.

ONO: Yeah.

IRITANI: I'm curious about one thing, because I don't remember how we got to the [Japanese Methodist Episcopal] church for Sunday School or. . .

ONO: I drove.

IRITANI: No, but before you drove.

ONO: Eunice [Mohri] drove. Florence [Mohri] and Eunice drove.

IRITANI: Mohris.

ONO: They were a mile away from us.

IRITANI: Right. But they were much older than us.

ONO: Yeah. They were older than me.

IRITANI: Much older.

ONO: Much older. Right. In fact I just met Florence last. . . what was it, last October, in Los Angeles. Eunice also went to. . . another thing, I can remember with Eunice is, she went to Santa Barbara State [University] when I was still in grammar school. And I can remember the time when we went to Santa Barbara State, saw the place and so on. As I remember that was possibly 1937.

IRITANI: Yes. Yes, when we took the trip along the coast?

ONO: I can remember going to UC Berkeley. Going up the campanile. To the top of it, the back of it, and back down again. I can remember my father saying, "This is an university." It was as if he was. . . .

IRITANI: Shall we stop?

[Yoneo was emotionally overwhelmed and an interruption occurred.]

[Interruption]

IRITANI: Okay, we're going to continue and get into the wartime situation. December 7th, 1941 was when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor and could you relate your memories?

ONO: Yeah. That day I was in church in Bakersfield and they made a comment and so we went to the car and I heard it on the radio. Because the car had a radio in it. So we used the car radio and heard the thing. And we sat there, and that was just the beginning, and we had no idea what that meant. I could remember talking about that with Mr. [Shin] Tada, and he says, "Well, I don't think that happened. That would be foolish. It's just like flying from the frying pan into the fire."

IRITANI: Meaning. . .

ONO: Meaning. . .

IRITANI: . . . That Japan would not have bombed Pearl Harbor?

ONO: He didn't think it would happen. Because it would be just like jumping out of the frying pan into the fire.

IRITANI: Japan was making a big mistake.

ONO: Tada was a bachelor, never been married. He worked as a gardener here and there, and so on.

IRITANI: And then, I know that night at church. . .

ONO: Uh huh. [Rev. Dillon] Throckmorton came over.

IRITANI: Rev. Throckmorton of Trinity Methodist came to support us. And do you remember any of the conversation?

ONO: No, I don't remember that conversation that well. But another. . . but one conversation that I remember when Joe was going. . . taking his freshman history class, you know, social science class, and Joe told me about the comment that his teacher who was

Stockton at that time, who became the Superintendent [of Kern County Schools] . . .

IRITANI: Jess Stockton.

ONO: Jess Stockton made. . . and his comment was that the students should not condemn any of the Japanese that were living here, because they didn't do anything. In other words they should respect them, we should help them, and everything.

IRITANI: Did you get any comments from any of your teachers?

ONO: No, I didn't get any comments from any of my teachers. I don't remember any.

IRITANI: Or responses of other students?

ONO: No. The only one as I remember was the one that Joe got. . .

IRITANI: From Mr. Stockton.

ONO: From Stockton.

IRITANI: And he was a wonderful man. Yeah, I had met him, too.

ONO: But what happened in California was, you know when I was at the University of California was my father's comment, as if he was expecting me to go there.

IRITANI: Well, you didn't, but I did. [Laughter] And after the war began, do you remember at what point. . . . All I know is that we could not travel more than five miles.

ONO: Yes, we couldn't travel more than five miles except we could go to school which was more than five miles.

IRITANI: But then the schools. . .

ONO: That was all right.

IRITANI: But the school did the transporting.

ONO: School did the transporting. And because we couldn't travel to church, so therefore I made the decision just take the kids and go to the Mountain View [Methodist] Church. And we got to know the minister there, and got to know the family there. . .

IRITANI: Have you any idea who the minister was?

ONO: Yeah. Fowler.

IRITANI: Oh, Rev. Fowler. I'll have to check up on that myself. And then do you know. . . . Well, you mentioned the sheriff's car to me.

ONO: Yeah, well the sheriff's car came later when we had to. . . I think what to do was. . . they wanted to know whether we had any short wave or whether we had any rifles or pistols or any guns.

IRITANI: And you. . .

ONO: And the sheriff made a comment to me, "You know if your father. . . if your parents had their citizenship papers, they wouldn't have to. . . we wouldn't have had to do this." And I commented back to him and said, "They can't get citizenship papers because the law in 1870 says they're not eligible for citizenship." And that really threw me because I thought most people knew about that law, and here I was a little high school kid, a sophomore in high school knew about it. And these are the people who enforce the law. They should know the law.

IRITANI: But, they didn't know that law.

- ONO: They didn't know that law. In fact, I find out the majority of the people never knew that law.
- IRITANI: That's right. At that time did you. . . did things occur at our home that. . . how did we prepare? All I know is. . .
- ONO: Well, the only thing we did, first thing we did was, you know, Kiku's mother [Hanaye Konno, wife of our parents' cousin Susumu Konno] was also a U.S. citizen being born in Hawaii, and I was a U.S. citizen. . . she was already a . . .
- IRITANI: An adult?
- ONO: Adult, so therefore, what my father did was put the whole farm operation in our names, in both of our names.
- IRITANI: Not that we owned the land. . .
- ONO: No, we didn't own any of the land, but he put the operation into our names.
- IRITANI: Do you remember when that was?
- ONO: I would guess that was December, January, somewhere around there.
- IRITANI: After the war began.
- ONO: We were planning on putting all the planting in for the next year. But by then February came around which was time to start planting the yam into the hot beds, all the things started changing, so therefore we decided not to plant anything that year.
- IRITANI: How was the information brought to us? Was it by radio, by telephone? Do you remember any of that?

ONO: No, most of the information came by radio. Radio or else. . .that's it. I don't remember. . .

IRITANI: Did anybody from town. . .

ONO: No, the only one that came over was from the sheriff's department that I know of. I think all the rest was by radio, or else it was by posting on the post.

IRITANI: But we wouldn't have had a post.

ONO: No, we didn't have a post there. We had to go into town to find out.

IRITANI: That's what I was wondering if you remember any of that, because I don't.

ONO: I don't remember how that thing got. . .

IRITANI: How the information got to our parents was what I was wondering.

ONO: The date and everything. It may have been. . . somebody may have called them up.

IRITANI: Telephone. I know we had a telephone.

ONO: We had a telephone. We were on a party line. As I remember the party line we were on was K.

IRITANI: [Laughter] I don't remember that.

ONO: K line. Because there were two lines out to Lamont.

IRITANI: Okay, so we know that the orders to leave were given.

ONO: At a certain time you had to be at a certain place. But you see by that time there was already. . . It was May so I can remember my father going into town with the Dodge [car] and selling it.

IRITANI: Oh, really?

ONO: So he sold it in town, as I remember. Get rid of it. Sold a lot of stuff. But that was after we were ready to go. We had five day's notice.

IRITANI: Is that what we had?

ONO: Uh huh. We had five day's notice to be at a certain place.

IRITANI: So much more [time] than some other places did. But five day's notice with already having information about other areas being. . .

ONO: Being already in camp. See the [the first group of] Bakersfield people went to Poston, I think it was on May the sixth, if I'm not mistaken.

IRITANI: To prepare.

ONO: To prepare the place. They were one of the early ones that went in. So there were a group of them already gone and we knew we were coming about later.

IRITANI: So even if there was five day's notice, actual notice, there was a lot more notice for us. We knew it was going to happen.

ONO: That's right. Almost a month ahead of time we knew. And we knew about Manzanar [Relocation Center in eastern California] already because Manzanar, I think, started in March.

IRITANI: And did you understand how the other things on the farm were sold? Do you remember any of that? I don't.

ONO: Like what?

IRITANI: Like, well I remember there were mules.

ONO: Oh. We sold them all.

IRITANI: Did people come out to the. . .

ONO: Yeah. Come out to the farm and bought them. I don't remember who it was or anything.

IRITANI: And then, storing the. . .

ONO: Storing the stuff, we stored it in the house that Kiku [Konno] used to live in. Kiku and her family. And the house was built by us. We built the house.

IRITANI: On the. . .

ONO: On the same land.

IRITANI: On the. . . Mr. [George] Peters' ranch. On his land. [Laughter]

ONO: Uh huh. So we stored everything in there and when Peters sold that land, he moved all of that, he himself, with his helpers moved all of that over to the Japanese Methodist Church.

IRITANI: Oh, is that what happened?

ONO: Yeah. He did all of that for us.

IRITANI: And then how did. . . I'm assuming Mr. Peters must have gotten us over to the [Santa Fe] train station [on May 25, 1942], since we couldn't have had the car.

ONO: Yeah, I think it was. I think they brought us to the train station.
He said goodbye to us.

IRITANI: But since there were so many of us. . . seven in our family and
three in the Konnos. Ten people couldn't have gotten in one car,
so we must have had maybe. . .

ONO: It may have been that. . . I don't remember who all was at the train
station. There was more than one person who went to the train
station.

IRITANI: To have taken us. I don't remember that part at all. I can still
picture what we did. . . that we were at the train station. Do you
remember any other people who helped us at all, other than. . .

ONO: Peters? No, I don't remember who else was there.

IRITANI: And of course, at [the Japanese Methodist Episcopal] church,
Emma Buckmaster and Lottie Phillips. . .

ONO: Yeah, she was there. Both of them were there. [Emma
Buckmaster and Lottie Phillips.]

IRITANI: And people from Trinity Church must have been around, too.
Because they formed this evacuation committee. Trinity and First
Church people did. So we were fortunate that we had. . .

ONO: Yeah. Most churches didn't do that. They didn't get that
involved. This is very unusual.

IRITANI: We were very fortunate. Uh, about the leaving Bakersfield, do
you remember? You mentioned that you remembered the train
and the fact that the windows were. . .

ONO: [Inaudible] Just as soon as we got into the Mojave Desert, I can remember all the windows being closed.

IRITANI: The shades had to be. . .

ONO: The shades came down. Uh huh.

IRITANI: The Mojave Desert. After we got out of the [Tehachapi] Mountains.

ONO: Yeah. Just as soon as we got out of the mountains, just as soon as we started going down the hill, then all of them were closed.

IRITANI: And Mojave Desert is desert.

ONO: Desert. Right. But the thing you have to remember, there was an airport there, and there were military things there all the way through that whole [inaudible]. In fact, Edwards Air Force base was started right after that.

IRITANI: But it wasn't there then.

ONO: No, not at that time. Then I can remember going from there to, what was that little town?

IRITANI: Barstow?

ONO: No, no, no. Not Barstow. Beyond Barstow.

IRITANI: Oh, I wouldn't know.

ONO: There was a place we had to change the train. . . not change trains. The train had to go to another track.

IRITANI: Oh, on the siding.

ONO: Yeah. We were on the siding, and we had to get over to Parker. And I can remember getting off at Parker. Shoot I forgot the name of that town. It was just a train place. Then we got to Parker. . .

IRITANI: Arizona.

ONO: Arizona. Then I can remember getting off the train, getting on the army truck which was open. Canvas on top and the benches on the side and driving thirteen miles. I can remember thirteen miles to camp.

IRITANI: I didn't know it was that far.

ONO: We got into camp then came to this barrack. I think we were at Block. . .

IRITANI: Nineteen?

ONO: No, we weren't at Block 19. We were at Block. . . where was it?

IRITANI: Oh, you mean where we checked in?

ONO: Checked in, yeah.

IRITANI: Oh, I have no idea.

ONO: Fifteen or something like that. It wasn't nineteen. And I can remember we checked in. The first thing we did was checked in. And then they gave us room assignment, and we got two rooms because it was a family of ten. With two families put together. [Our family of seven and the Konno family of three.] And then we got the bags. You know, the bags to make our mattress.

IRITANI: Yeah. We put straw in our. . .

ONO: Straw in our mattress.

IRITANI: Actually, you know those bags were body bags?

ONO: Is that what they were?

IRITANI: That's what I've been told.

ONO: They could have been.

IRITANI: Yeah. That's what was available to the army. And then. . .

ONO: Then we went down to Block 19. . . we got back on the truck again, went to 19. And then the truck came across the. . . you know the school site at 19. . .

IRITANI: Open area.

ONO: Open area, and dumped barrels of straw. And we had to go out there, fill up and make our own bed. The bed was a cot. Metal cot. Army cot.

IRITANI: Right. Anything else from that time that you remember?

ONO: Well, the first thing I can remember of that period, that time getting off the thing and going in is, you had to sign in, but at the same time, they had. . . somebody made a whole bunch of lemonade and so on. It was hot!

IRITANI: Yeah. May was already summer. The desert.

ONO: We could drink the lemonade, but, boy a lot of people got sick on that lemonade because it was made in the galvanized. . .

IRITANI: Oh, really? Galvanized tub?

ONO: Tub, uh uh. In the garbage can, actually. I think the lemon. . .

IRITANI: Ate the metal.

ONO: Yeah. So quite a few people got sick. Diarrhetic.

IRITANI: I didn't know that. And then, at what point do you remember you were assigned to start working?

ONO: Well, we started working right away.

IRITANI: You did? Were you already assigned at the check-in place?

ONO: No we were not assigned.

IRITANI: Or volunteered to. . .

ONO: You volunteered. . . You had a choice of going to work or not going to work. You never had to work.

IRITANI: Uh huh.

ONO: And the thing that was interesting at that time is that, hey you could work as a laborer and get \$12 a month. Or you could work as a garbage collector and got \$19 a month.

IRITANI: A garbage collector?

ONO: Right. You know why?

IRITANI: Why? Nobody. . .

ONO: Nobody wanted the job.

IRITANI: Nobody wanted the job, so it commanded more.

ONO: So they paid him \$19 a month. Just like the doctor.

IRITANI: But at what point were you. . . did you receive that assignment, or you volunteered to do it?

ONO: I volunteered.

IRITANI: Was it at that time. . .

ONO: No, it was a little later. I was just going to go out to work. You know, doing any work that was available.

IRITANI: When did you start then?

ONO: I started working in June. Just right after we got there. I didn't stand around or anything. I started working right away. Then they asked for volunteers who would like to go to the hospital and clean that place up and get it ready.

IRITANI: So what was your first work, then? I thought the hospital was your first work.

ONO: Well, actually, the first was, I was just going to be on the work crew. That's all. And then, I volunteered to go help clean up the hospital to get it ready, and then after I had already cleaned up the hospital, then they asked me if I would stay as an orderly in the hospital.

IRITANI: So you were an orderly. . .

ONO: In the hospital.

IRITANI: As a sixteen year old. Were you already sixteen?

ONO: I was seventeen already.

IRITANI: Seventeen, now. And do you remember what that job was like?

ONO: Yeah. You see, then they said, "We'd like to have you come midnight to eight o'clock in the morning." And they assigned me over to the OB Gynecology Ward.

IRITANI: And that time, of course, we didn't have school?

ONO: No. No school because this was in June. School wasn't started yet.

IRITANI: Not until September.

ONO: Then I worked in Ob and Gynecology and I delivered my first baby in that hospital. I think it was in July or August. I can remember the. . .

IRITANI: No one was there with you?

ONO: Oh, there was a doctor there. There was one doctor that had two years' experience. And there was one nurse who happened to be a full nurse, and myself. And we had four ladies, delivering at the same time.

IRITANI: Oh-h-h.

ONO: That's how come I had. . .

IRITANI: So you had. . . you were assigned one of the ladies.

ONO: Right. To catch the baby.

IRITANI: [Chuckle]

ONO: Then, when was it? This was in July. Then, also, we were all over during the. . . was it June? Right after the. . . I think the hospital started right at the beginning of June. We had the whole place cleaned up and the stuff ready for bringing in patients. And then I can remember August, because in August I was working at midnight. Going to work at midnight. In August there was a group of people that came in from Salinas. . . no, yeah it was from Salinas, that's where it was from. And they came in, and there was a whole bunch of them were sick. Heat stroke. And I can remember how busy we were at that time. Because we just barely got the [inaudible] we had to bring in the hospital right away. See

the thing is with heat stroke, what you have to do is you have to cool them off right away. And one of the major things in cooling them off is you have to watch it very carefully because they will go into shakes. And if they go into shakes, the temperature goes back up again, because that's exactly how the body heats itself, by shaking.

IRITANI: Oh, by shaking.

ONO: Uh huh. So therefore, what you do is you put ice on them, and bring the temperature down, but you watch it carefully so that they don't go into shakes. Then just before they go into shakes, you take all the ice out, and warm them up again.

IRITANI: Oh, oh my.

ONO: And when you warm them up again then the temperature doesn't go up as high. That was quite an experience.

IRITANI: I would say so. So how long were you there at the hospital, then?

ONO: I was there at the hospital till October.

IRITANI: And then school started.

ONO: Then school started.

IRITANI: And tell us about the way you had to. . .

ONO: Well, the thing is before school started, we had a Superintendent of the School. Shoot, I forgot his name. He was a Hawaiian, he had his Ph. D. working with CORE system. That's why we happen to have a CORE system there. CORE Education.

IRITANI: CORE Education means?

ONO: Means that the social sciences and the arts and the writing, literature and so on were all in one class. That was your CORE class for your [inaudible]. Then you had other classes like, if you want chemistry, there was independent class by itself.

IRITANI: So, what classes were you taking?

ONO: I was taking CORE. And I was taking chemistry. And I was taking advanced algebra. Sanematsu was my advanced algebra instructor. See, I was taking advanced algebra in my junior year, because I didn't take it in my sophomore year. Because I was one year behind.

IRITANI: Right. Sanematsu, is Ben Sanematsu.

ONO: Ben Sanematsu. Uh huh.

IRITANI: Do you remember much about him?

ONO: Oh. . .

IRITANI: He was a Nisei.

ONO: He was a Nisei. He was a Cal graduate. He was a mathematics. . . His eyesight was kind of bad. But not really bad, yet. He was going downhill at that time.

IRITANI: Was he. . . He was a Cal graduate. Had he been teaching any place?

ONO: No. He had not. Just graduated.

IRITANI: Just graduated. Yeah. And do you remember your other teachers that year?

ONO: No. Ben is about the only one. I can remember. . . my chemistry instructor, one of them was a Cal graduate. I think he was doing assistant, a teacher's assistant or something like that at Cal, in chemistry.

IRITANI: What kind of equipment did you have? Did you have equipment?

ONO: We had some equipment. But not much.

IRITANI: How about textbooks?

ONO: Textbooks, we had California textbooks. All the textbooks we used were all. . .

[End Tape 1, Side B]

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

IRITANI: Okay. We were talking about the California State textbooks you were using. Can you remember. . .

ONO: I think another thing that was interesting was that we were assigned to the California School System, although it was in Arizona, because I don't think the state of Arizona accepted us in the school system there. So therefore, all of our graduation and everything was based upon California requirements. Although we were in Arizona. Again, California was not for it. And I would say about half the teachers were non-certified teachers. The other half was. . .they were. . .

IRITANI: Well, even like Ben Sanematsu, if he had just graduated. . .

ONO: He wasn't certified either.

IRITANI: . . . from college, he was not certified. And the internee teachers were more likely to be at that level. Among the non-internees, the Caucasian teachers who came in, did you have very many Caucasian teachers?

ONO: Yeah. One teacher I had was, again it was in my senior year, I had a teacher who was my literature teacher. See, I took more English than most high school students. Besides the four years of typical English requirement, I took English lit also, on top of that. She was a graduate of Indiana University. But she was a certified teacher back East.

IRITANI: Did you get to know any of your teachers very closely?

ONO: The only one I knew was Patton.

IRITANI: And she was your teacher. . .

ONO: Physiology. In fact, she went with me when we went East.

IRITANI: Oh, really?

ONO: Oh, yes. Uh huh. She was with me. And. . .

IRITANI: Well, before we get to that, tell us how you decided, at that point then to continue your education?

ONO: Well, you see, before then. . . . You have to remember there was a lot of things that happened before. One of the things that happened when. . . before the school started, my junior year in high school, I met the Superintendent of Schools, that was going to be the Superintendent of Schools. He started the CORE System.

I don't know. I think he invited me to his room. And then he loaned me the book called, *Study of Man* by Litton.

IRITANI: L-I-N-T-O-N or L-I-T-T-O-N?

ONO: Litton. L-I-T-T-O-N. Ralph Litton who was an anthropologist. A physical anthropologist.

IRITANI: Okay. I can look that up.

ONO: I think he did his Ph.D. in. . . on the Northwest Indians. And another one he wrote Woodworth. Psychology.

IRITANI: W-O-O-D-W-O-R-T-H.

ONO: T-H, I think. He was a well-known experimental psychologist. He loaned me that book and I read that book, also. Then. . . I forgot what other book. There were quite a few books I read at that time.

IRITANI: And you were just going into your year?

ONO: Junior high school.

IRITANI: Junior year.

ONO: Junior year in high school, yeah. Also when I was going to go in my junior year in high school, just before that I read another book that was quite interesting. That was called. . . this was a philosophy book by Jean Jacques Rousseau. *Social Contract*. In fact, in my first year, there was one orderly that was there who was older than me already. . . I think he already had two years in college in. There was a study group there in Poston, on the study under Social Contract. So I went with him to some of his study group.

IRITANI: Oh, really?

ONO: There were a lot of things. . .

IRITANI: They were already adults in that group.

ONO: They were already adults. Right.

IRITANI: And you were probably. . .

ONO: I was the youngest. . .

IRITANI: Teenager there.

ONO: Teenager there. Right.

IRITANI: So you were exposed when you were in Poston to all this philosophy and psychology for the first time, really?

ONO: Right. Then, another thing that happened. Then I got some books on Immanuel Kant's writing and a few others, and I also bought the book from Sears [Roebuck Co.] on *Das Kapital* and *Mein Kampf* [by Adolph Hitler] and read both of those. Then, between my junior and my senior year, I worked in the summer of my junior and senior year. I went up to Bureau of Sociological Research. And talked to Dr. [Alexander] Leighton and said, "I would like to work here."

IRITANI: So you asked to be included in that group.

ONO: Yes. Then at that time, there was a course that he was giving on Freudian psychology. He was giving a course during the seminar, Freudian psychology with some of his people working for him who were already graduates. You know, from university in anthropology and so on.

IRITANI: It was mostly anthropology?

ONO: Yeah. Mostly anthropology because his wife is an anthropologist.

IRITANI: So you were taking a seminar with adult who were already in that area of study. [Chuckle]

ONO: And at night, I would sit in on the classes, and all that. I couldn't take the course.

IRITANI: You were gathering information. Not for the units or anything.

ONO: Nothing. Just for my own [inaudible].

IRITANI: That was strictly during the summer?

ONO: Then the fall semester started. That's when I took my first course with Patton on human physiology, and so on.

IRITANI: Did you work during the school year?

ONO: No, I didn't work during the school year.

IRITANI: You were just a summer worker.

ONO: Just a summer worker.

IRITANI: During your senior year, were there any significant. . . well, of course you had to make the decision to go to college.

ONO: Well, the senior year. . . for instance, the literature courses were quite interesting because it was in those literature courses that I read a lot of the books. A lot of the writings of some of the well-known American writers, as well. You know, like Ralph Waldo Emerson. And quite a few others. And I read those, and so on. It was also in the CORE courses. . . yeah, by that time I finished the book and I'd already read *Das Kapital* and I knew the philosophies.

And I also read books written by [Georg Wilhelm Friedrich] Hegel already by that time when I was in senior in high school. You could see I was someplace else. . .

IRITANI: You were already way beyond me. I know that. At that time in high school, were we already in the new internee built buildings?

ONO: Yeah. My senior year was in the new high school that was built by Joe. . .

IRITANI: Joe, and Tomi said she worked on it, too.

ONO: Tomi worked on it?

IRITANI: I was surprised. I learned that quite recently. So, now you didn't have to traipse all over the camp.

ONO: No, we were all in one place.

IRITANI: And among those classes or teachers were there any other than Miss Patton. Any other significant. . .

ONO: No.

IRITANI: . . . information learned or. . .

ONO: No. She's the only one that I really remember. I also took typing that year. From Fred Ono. And Fred said, "If you won't take the second semester, I'll give you a D." So, I said, "Okay, I won't take the second semester." So I got a D. I messed up. The thing is, I got the i and e backwards. And boy, there's more i and e in the words and you get five points off each time.

IRITANI: [Chuckle] Did your typing improve over the years?

ONO: No, never did improve, so. . .

IRITANI: You let the secretary take care of that.

ONO: That's right.

IRITANI: When you were in high school then, you had to already have made the decision to go on to college.

ONO: Yeah I made the decision long time ago.

IRITANI: When.

ONO: Oh, by the time I was in the junior year of high school, I was. . .

IRITANI: You knew you were going to college?

ONO: I knew I was going to college, someplace. But, I was already looking.

IRITANI: Okay, so in your senior year, was that when you determined you would go to [University of] Connecticut? Or. . .

ONO: You see, the thing is there is another thing that happened during that period. I also wrote to the Education. . . what was that committee that was formed to assist in education?

IRITANI: Financial. . . Yeah, there was a Nisei Relocation Committee. . .

ONO: Educational Relocation Committee. I found out that hey, that isn't the way I had to go. I had to go through the standard relocation because if I went through the standard relocation, then I've got that money for \$50.00 plus the transportation wherever I wanted to go. See by that time, by the time I left. . . just before I left, you didn't have to have a job before you could leave.

IRITANI: Oh, really?

ONO: So, therefore, what I did was I told them I wanted to go to Hartford, Connecticut or New Haven Connecticut. And that's all I had to do. And they would give me a train ticket to that place.

[Comment by Vicki: Dad told me he chose Connecticut because he had seen a picture of it in a magazine and thought it was beautiful and green.]

IRITANI: Oh, so it was not an assignment to a . . .

ONO: No assignment to a school. So, it was a lot easier. See, although I got the information from them, they were trying to encourage me to go to school like the . . . what was that school up in Maine, where Nathaniel Hawthorne graduated from?

IRITANI: I don't know.

ONO: And some of the others. Because they found out that I could pay a lot of my way through.

IRITANI: And pay because you yourself had the money? Or because the family had the money?

ONO: The family had the money.

IRITANI: Were you able to save some of that money that you. . . What were you getting? Sixteen or twelve? Sixteen dollars [a month]?

ONO: No, twelve.

IRITANI: You were getting twelve. As an orderly and with the Sociological group?

ONO: Yeah. It was twelve.

IRITANI: Twelve. Okay.

ONO: But the thing is. . .

IRITANI: You can't save much out of twelve dollars.

ONO: The thing is there was nothing I was going to buy with it anyway. So I just left it there. Then on top of that, the year before my junior year, I sold a lot of Pop's stocks.

IRITANI: Oh, you did? Before we went into camp?

ONO: After we were in camp. When we were in camp. I sold a lot of them for him. I wrote the letters for him.

IRITANI: So do you remember which stocks he owned. All I remember is that I had to listen to the radio everyday for the stock report and write it down. I didn't know anything beyond that.

ONO: He owned the SP [Southern Pacific Railroad]. His biggest holding was in SP. And he bought the SP for seven and a half and I sold them all for round about fifty some odd dollars. From seven and a half.

IRITANI: And I know he had Warner Brothers and Transamerica.

ONO: Yeah, he had Transamerica. He had Warner Brothers, and he had SP mostly. See that was during the days when you used to buy stock in the company. Today you buy the mutual fund because nobody wants to do the research that is required. Because if they buy a mutual fund, you have a mutual fund with a staff doing all the research for you.

IRITANI: So you sold his stocks and so he had that money in the bank.

ONO: He had money. Right.

IRITANI: Did he sell most of his stocks at that time?

ONO: Yeah. He sold most of his stock [inaudible]. See, by that time, he already had his stroke and so on.

IRITANI: Oh, I see. I don't remember when he had the stroke.

ONO: He had his stroke at [age] forty three. So it was 1943.

IRITANI: That was the year you were a senior then. In high school, that is. And so you went to Hartford, Connecticut directly.

ONO: Actually, I went from here [Poston] to Chicago.

IRITANI: To Chicago.

ONO: We stayed at Morikawa's [a family that lived in Bakersfield before the war] place.

IRITANI: Oh, okay.

ONO: And then from there we went. . . at the same time I went to the. . .

IRITANI: Well, you were by yourself?

ONO: No, Patton was with me.

IRITANI: Oh, that's right.

ONO: Then she brought me over to the North American Baptist Convention Headquarters there. . .

IRITANI: In Chicago?

ONO: In Chicago, right. So I went to the headquarters. I was talking to them and they asked me if I would assist them when I get to Connecticut in their summer program to talk about the relocation camp. I said, "Sure, I'll do it." That's how I got into that one.

IRITANI: And when you got to Hartford then, was Miss Patton also with you there? What was her first name? We haven't said that. Do you remember? Well, I could look it up. I think I still have your book.

ONO: I don't remember.

IRITANI: That's okay. And after you got to Hartford, was she there with you?

ONO: She was there with me. Then I got back down to Yale [University] because I could get in there. So I got in the summer session. So that's how I got in. . .

IRITANI: Okay. They enrolled you.

ONO: Yeah. Then Connecticut State passed a law saying that all Nisei's were in-state students. So therefore, I went to the University of Connecticut.

IRITANI: So you were considered a legal resident of Connecticut.

ONO: Resident of Connecticut. And I was able to go to the University of Connecticut as an in-state student. So, that's how I started there.

IRITANI: How long were you at Yale, then? Not very long?

ONO: The summer.

IRITANI: Just that summer session?

ONO: Just the summer session.

IRITANI: How did you choose UConn? The University of Connecticut?

ONO: Well, it was a smaller school than Yale. It only had 2, 500 students in it. It was a smaller school. And another thing is, way out in

the country. It was not in the middle of a city. See, Yale. . . here is the [inaudible], and here's Yale, and here's a green, here's a bunch of three churches, and Yale was right here. Right smack in the. . .

IRITANI: And you didn't want to be. . .

ONO: I didn't like that.

IRITANI: . . . that much of an urban setting? And so you chose to go to the University of Connecticut.

ONO: A little country school. University of Connecticut was a little bitty country school. It was only a Post Office. The Post Office was in the bottom floor of one of the buildings and that was it.

IRITANI: And the town was Storrs.

ONO: Storrs. That was the Post Office. And it only had one grocery store.

IRITANI: Oh, really? [Chuckle]

ONO: That's it. And had one restaurant over here called Nasty's. In fact, I can remember taking a course in bacteriology. And one of the questions is, "What is Nastitus." And I think one of the students answered, "It's an inflammation created by eating at Nasty's." Well, that isn't true, but the thing is that it was a very creative answer. So therefore, he got it right. The addition of the word inflammation.

IRITANI: So, what classes did you take at the University of Connecticut?

ONO: I started. . .

IRITANI: Your major was. . .

ONO: Philosophy. Religion. Sociology. Anthropology. Almost all. . .

IRITANI: The whole general area.

ONO: General Education area. Government. International Relations.
Economics. Statistical Methods.

IRITANI: So what was the most memorable thing for you about being at the University of Connecticut?

ONO: Well, the University of Connecticut, the interesting thing was, my grades were kind of cockeyed. Because I would be "A" in one and "F" in another. It all depended on how I took the courses. I was on the Dean's List and not on the Dean's List. So, just a mixture of grades. I was very independent. In fact, when I was taking Botany, I remember going into the finals in Botany. I mean the final final. And I only had a "D" going into the finals. And at the final, out of 200 students, I made the second highest grade in that class. And the. . . what's that. . . student assistant told me, "What happened here?" "Well," I said, "I caught up with the reading."

IRITANI: [Chuckle] You finally did your homework.

ONO: Yeah. The thing is quite often, if I hadn't read it, I would just write on the paper, and said, "I haven't read the material, so I cannot answer." [Inaudible] So by the end of the semester, I finally caught up on all the reading. Because I was carrying 24 units at that time.

IRITANI: Twenty four?

ONO: Right.

IRITANI: Oh, my.

ONO: Which was overload.

IRITANI: You actually got your Bachelor of Science. It wasn't a Bachelor of Arts.

ONO: Well, I got both.

IRITANI: Oh, you did? So how. . . You had all those classes, and [reading from Yoneo's biographical sketch form] you were four years in. . .

ONO: That's Arts.

IRITANI: And then you went. . .

ONO: Back again.

IRITANI: Continued to get your. . .

ONO: In '52. I got my Bachelor of Science with that one.

IRITANI: This was your BS there. And your Bachelor of Science was in. . .

ONO: Horticulture. Well, the thing is at the time I was taking that stuff, because it was a more scientific field, it was easier for me to take the tests because it was either this or this. And it's all right. The thing is with this Art side, you know you could say, "If I interpret it this way, it's yes. If I interpret it this way, it's no." That used to really create problems. Essay was a lot easier for me in the tests.

IRITANI: So you got both your BA and BS there and you got it in Horticulture because. . .

ONO: Because there was already a nursery.

IRITANI: The family had already started [the Evergreen Nursery]. . .

ONO: But before that I was working for the American Friends Service Committee before I went to the nursery. '48.

IRITANI: Where?

ONO: '48. I was down out of the Pasadena office.

IRITANI: You were working down there? In Pasadena?

ONO: Yes. And I was working in Orange County.

IRITANI: Oh, oh. I didn't realize that. When were you there?

ONO: '48.

IRITANI: Yes, but, during the summer?

ONO: No, summer and fall.

IRITANI: And what were you doing?

ONO: I was with the American Friends Service Committee. I was with the Peace Education Group.

IRITANI: Oh-h. Okay. And you lived down there at that time. And what was your actual duties. Do you remember that?

ONO: More or less Peace Education and working with groups of people.

IRITANI: And you'd go to talk to the groups?

ONO: Talk to the groups and lead in discussions, and so on. Again that goes back to my philosophy.

IRITANI: Your philosophy area again. And the nursery. . .

ONO: The nursery was started in '47. Between both of them. [Our father and brother Joe started the Evergreen Nursery]

IRITANI: But you were. . .

ONO: Then I got out of there [out of Orange County], I went to Bakersfield again, lived in Bakersfield. I worked in the nursery. Then that summer I worked in the YMCA as program director. Then I was a volunteer at the "Y" doing youth education type of thing, and I was volunteer at Carver as youth education.

IRITANI: Carver?

ONO: Is black.

IRITANI: It's the community center in a very poor. . .

ONO: Poor black area. The poorest black area. In fact, the [black] people who were living on the west side of Union Avenue would have nothing to do with them.

IRITANI: Right.

ONO: Because they were just trash.

IRITANI: Very, very poor blacks in the Carver Community Center. And you worked there, how long?

ONO: I worked there as a volunteer for quite a few years.

IRITANI: But this was all before you graduated, got your landscape architect's. . .

ONO: Some of it was before, but most of it was after.

IRITANI: Well, when you got your BS, there were times you were back and forth, then? And working. . .

ONO: The thing was, I was working mostly at night after I came back. See, the first thing, I got back to Bakersfield, and Joe asked me if I would get the contractor's license for him, because he wasn't sure

that he could get it. And all the story was that most people had to take it two or three times before they even got the contractor's license. So he says, "Can you get the contractor's license for him."

IRITANI: But had you already taken the horticultural. . .

ONO: Oh, I already had the degree.

IRITANI: The degree. And so you. . .

ONO: So therefore, I applied. I also knew some contractors and so they signed up [inaudible]. I had the experience. And knew all that stuff. Uh. . . I forgot the guy's name who signed up for me. He was a building contractor. And then I went to Los Angeles, took the test, passed. . .

IRITANI: And that was about in 194. . .

ONO: No, 1952.

IRITANI: In '52 you got the contractor's license for the nursery.

ONO: For the nursery. That was just right after I got out of school.

IRITANI: And right after you got your Bachelor's and you returned to Bakersfield, did you take any more classes. I know you have some other classes listed, but those are additional [inaudible].

ONO: Yeah. I took classes at the University. . . Fresno State at Bakersfield Extension there, in education. By that time, what was happening to me was that the. . . what-you-call-it, Bakersfield [Community] College asked me if I would teach a course at Bakersfield College.

IRITANI: But, had you already started your landscape architect's work?

ONO: No. It wasn't started. I didn't have my license at that time.

IRITANI: They asked you to teach before? [Chuckle]

ONO: Yeah, before I got it, because I had this background. They asked me.

IRITANI: I know, but no experience. [Laughter]

ONO: Yeah. But you see the way I got into that teaching was, in 1952, the people within Bakersfield, the nurserymen in Bakersfield were getting fearful that the other [discout business] people were coming into their. . . you know, companies were putting up little nurseries. Like for instance, there was a cut-rate place came in to Bakersfield, was putting up a nursery and they had to get themselves pretty well known. So I says, "Well, why don't we form an organization. Kern County Nurserymen's Association, or something like that, you know. Which would be a title that is acceptable, that you could tell who it is. And so. . .

IRITANI: So the old-time nurserymen. . .

ONO: Old-time nurseries got together and I wrote the constitution for them and I formed the organization for them. See again, my knowledge from other places came in handy.

IRITANI: Right.

ONO: Trying to direct them. Then they decided to. . . for every week get a place in the planting in Kern County. And get an article written by every nurseryman.

IRITANI: Into the *Bakersfield Californian* newspaper. So you kept the association's name before the public.

ONO: Yeah. And the nurseryman's name before the public.

IRITANI: And the nurseryman's name.

ONO: They wrote the different articles. When I wrote my article for Evergreen Nursery, I had my name on it, so therefore, *The Bakersfield Californian* came to me. Asked if I would write for them. So then I wrote for them for two years.

IRITANI: So, you had your own by-line.

ONO: Yes. I had my by-line. Right.

IRITANI: [Chuckle] And what years were those?

ONO: Oh, that was in 1953, '54, '55, or something like that.

IRITANI: But you were not working outside. . .

ONO: I was working in the nursery, until 1956. In 1956, what happened was that. . . . In 1954, I got my landscape architecture's license. Because the law was passed in '53. . .

IRITANI: The law was passed that the person had to have the license, now.

ONO: That's right. So in June 1, 1954 I got my license [License number 56]. In fact, it was very interesting because they sent me the application from the state. I didn't have anything in the state. They just sent me the application from the state because I was one of the people who was already doing that type of thing. And just as soon as I filled the whole thing out and sent it back to the state,

I got a number. My number happens to be 56. And that was in 1954 that I got this license.

IRITANI: Very good. And then, did you start working for Kern County then, or. . .

ONO: No, no. After that, then I had a contract with the City of Bakersfield. In 1956, I had a contract with them to work their park system up. I was working with the director of Parks and Recreation at that time, and had this contract with them. And so I designed a lot of the parks in Bakersfield. Original designs.

IRITANI: I know you mentioned. . .

ONO: And I did the. . . you know the ponding basins. I did do that one.

IRITANI: Oh, yeah.

ONO: And so on. That ponding basin. . .

IRITANI: There had never been a ponding basin before that. That was the first one in California. Was it something that you had read?

ONO: No. Just a good idea.

IRITANI: Just seemed like it would fit that park. Which ones did you put it in to. Was it by Frank West School?

[End Tape 2, Side A]

[Begin Tape 2, Side B]

[Because we were not sure what had not been recorded, Yoneo repeated some information.]

ONO: The ponding basin and so on. I did get my license as a landscape architect in 1954. And the law was passed in 1953, and so

therefore, it became effective in January of 1954. And it was right after that the state sent me the application form, and so I just filled it out and sent it back in. That's how come I happened to get the number 56 as my license number. And then after I got my license, what was it. . . 1956, two years after that, because while I was. . . . When I got my license, I was still working with the nursery, and we had the contract with Edwards Air Force Base. . .

IRITANI: Oh, you did?

ONO: And I had to finish that up. That was 450 acres that we worked on, as a contractor. So we got a lot of contracting jobs that were very unusual. And that was a very unusual thing. I was usually quite often in the state job, and we would go to the contracting, you know the bid openings? And I would be the youngest kid there.

IRITANI: Of course.

ONO: And everyone would be older than me. And that was a very unusual situation. And then when I finished that project at Edwards then I started my own practice, and I got a contract with the city of Bakersfield to do all the parks, including that park that I suggested the ponding basin in. And so on, and so I designed all the parks for them, in 1956-57. And by '57, I had my office on Bernard Street and I was doing other work in Fresno. Private homes in Fresno.

IRITANI: Oh, really?

ONO: Uh huh. In fact, I used to drive to Fresno every week end to see the projects up there. And come back. In 1960, I decided to go in to work for the County of Kern as a planner, because I had that background also. And I got a job as assistant planner of Kern County on the Civil Service exam. And the reason behind that one was, in order to get into the health insurance system of the County, because before then I wasn't able to use any of the. . . any of the insurance companies would not insure me or anybody in the family because I couldn't be insured.

IRITANI: And you could not be insured because. . .

ONO: Because of the high blood pressure which showed up when I was in camp.

IRITANI: And that was after you were given the typhoid shot.

ONO: After I had the second typhoid shot, my blood pressure went way up to 180. And then by the time that I was registered for the military, and they wanted to test. . . you know, the pre-induction test, they. . . I went to the pre-induction test even though I was signed as a C.O.

IRITANI: You were a conscientious objector, but you still had to go. . .

ONO: Had to go through the pre-induction test. And at the pre-induction test, I had over 200. They decided, "Hey, you're not eligible for anything." And that's how I was left out.

[Comment by Miyo: He always said they gave him a 4-F rating.]

Ono: Then after that, so therefore, I had to get this job with the county and I got it as an assistant planner. The first they did, they assigned me to the section of what they called advance planning, which meant that I was supposed to work on planning projects in the future, for future designs and so on. Not on the current planning which works with the administration of all the plans as they build it currently. But, I was building into the future. So for the County of Kern, quite often I would do a lot of the demographic study, or population econ studies, and so on, which again goes back into my earliest studies in sociology and anthropology. And then I would get a lot of the design work into the future designs of the various communities. So I would get into the street design, transportation systems design, and all kinds of stuff like that. In fact, all my planning experience all the years I was in planning has always been in advance planning. Never in current planning, although I wrote quite a few of the ordinances in landscape requirements and so on for the City of Fresno when I was working there, because again I had a special knowledge.

IRITANI: We'll get back now to your family. And we haven't really talked about Frances [Frances Eveline Holden Ono]. I think the tape will show that we have not talked about Frances. And we'd better get back to how you met your wife Frances.

ONO: Oh, I met Frances at the church cabin at University of Connecticut which was a Congregational Church cabin. And what we were

doing out there was, this was a NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] picnic at the church cabin. And Frances happened to be chairman of that NAACP chapter, school chapter on the campus. That's how we met.

IRITANI: Immediately there was a social significance, not just personal, but you were both on the same [social action] page there. Same interests. And give us Frances' full name, and her date of birth, where she was born and all that.

ONO: Her birth is October the 20, nineteen twenty, I think it's eight.

IRITANI: I think so.

ONO: I think it's 1928. And she was born in Orange, New Jersey. And their parents. . . her father was Edwin Holden and he was a Congregational minister. He was a graduate of Wesleyan University and then graduated Yale Divinity School at the time when McIntosh was teaching there. Systematic theology.

IRITANI: Oh, I wouldn't know.

ONO: McIntosh was a very interesting man in systematic theology because he had a concept that systematic theology should be in the field of science, and not in the field of theology, because he was what they call it, the. . . shoot, I forgot the terminology that they used to use.

IRITANI: Well, that's all right. We'll go on with Frances and your marriage.

ONO: And Frances was a graduate of the University of Connecticut in bacteriology and zoology, and she was doing some graduate work

at the University of Massachusetts, right after she graduated in '51. Then, her father was also at the. . . he was a minister up there in Vermont at Middlebury, Vermont, and the first two years she went to Middlebury College in Middlebury, Vermont. And then to the University of Connecticut. Then what happened after that. Oh, then we got married in Bakersfield, that was in 1952 or was it '53? It was '52, I figure. '52 we got married.

[Comment by Vicki: Mom worked at a veterinarian's lab at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst testing cow's milk for mastitis. She told them she was going west in a year to get married, but they still hired her.]

IRITANI: Let's see what you put down here.

ONO: I put down, I think, '52.

IRITANI: 1952.

ONO: Got married in 1952 at the First Methodist Church there.

IRITANI: And then tell us about your children.

ONO: I had three children. One was Steven Mead Ono. The son. He is a musician today. The second one was. . .

IRITANI: Well, he was born in 1954.

ONO: March 27, 1954. And Madeline Miyo was born September 1, 1956, and Vicki was born December 8, 1957? Was it seven? Yeah. '57.

IRITANI: And we call her Vicki, but her legal name is. . .

ONO: Victoria Jeanne. And the Jeanne comes from Frances' mother's name, Jeanne. Her mother went through Normal School. She was a teacher.

IRITANI: And then when Frances came to Bakersfield, she worked at. . .

ONO: Kern County Hospital. She worked as a bacteriologist. A milk bacteriologist. She worked as public health bacteriologist at the Kern County Hospital.

IRITANI: That's public health.

ONO: Public health bacteriologist. In fact she has a certificate in public health bacteriologist, as well as in milk technician.

IRITANI: And then you had the three little children.

ONO: Three children, and the decision was made to go to work for Kern County, because I can't get any life insurance, or any type of insurance, or health insurance, on my own. So, therefore, I went to work for Kern County and I got. . . and I was able to use the Kern County health insurance system.

IRITANI: That you needed.

ONO: Yeah, that I required by that time. I had my three.

IRITANI: Three children.

ONO: Not only that. Another thing that happened after Miyo was born, I think she was born in. . .

IRITANI: September.

ONO: September. Then by December, she had a strangulated hernia. And I had to put her in the hospital for that. And I had to pay that

out of my pocket, because I had no insurance. And that convinced me that, "Hey, I need insurance." Then with the three, we lived in Bakersfield. And then I think it was it was '57. In '57 we moved up there on 3008 Arnold Street on the north side of Bakersfield.

[Comment by Vicki: Mom said Vicki was born the same year as Miyo's surgery. Half of our income went to medical bills in 1957.]

IRITANI: Oh, I see, in 1957.

ONO: Yeah, in '57, which was a 1400 sq. ft. house? Which was a pretty good sized house in those days. Three bedrooms.

IRITANI: You stayed with the county department. . .

ONO: Until 1963.

IRITANI: And could you explain the change that occurred?

ONO: Well, in 196-- . . . I took the examination with the county for an assistant. . . for an associate planner's position. And I found out that I was the. . . after all the people that took the exam that year, there was only two of us who passed it. There was one person from Albuquerque, New Mexico passed it, and myself. And most of the people who took it with me didn't pass it. And one of the biggest problems with that examination was that they had an essay question. . . not essay. They had a paragraph that you had to analyze in terms of what it meant and how it was structured, and so on. Or, for instance, in the error to change the errors, and so on. And the advantage of having that course as a dumb-bell

English in [freshman year of] high school, so that at that point I was able to pass that test, because I knew the English language structure in detail. And that helped me in passing that one. In fact, that course helped me passing the placement exam in English when I was in college, also.

IRITANI: Okay, so at that point what did you do? Were you. . .

ONO: No, the person from Albuquerque was hired. So I was out. So therefore, I took the exam for the City of Bakersfield. And I got a job as assistant planner of the City of Bakersfield. Then, when I got over to the city of Bakersfield, then the city manager was fired. Remember when the city manager was fired in '63? And then the planning director was fired, and then I was fired.

IRITANI: And the reason for all those firings?

ONO: Was change in government. The [Bakersfield City] Council can make a decision to lay off the city manager. And because the planning department's under the direction of the city manager, therefore, we were protected by the city manager. And when the planning director was out, then they brought in a new city manager, and they brought in a new planning director and the new planning director got rid of me. And that's how that works out.

[Comment by interviewer: the City Council was very conservative in their thinking regarding the growth and development of Bakersfield. I recall Yoneo saying that a large department store in the downtown

shopping area offered to remodel and expand, if the City would obtain Federal Redevelopment money. But a councilman said that would be socialistic. The downtown died as new shopping malls were erected in the outlying areas.]

[Comment by Vicki: Dad told me that he opposed the movement of the downtown department stores to the outskirts by rezoning. He opposed the plans and developers of the Valley Plaza Mall. He told me he spoke up at council meeting about how development of the Valley Plaza Mall would kill downtown Bakersfield. Dad supported redevelopment. He told me he got fired from the City of Bakersfield because land developers wanted Valley Plaza Mall and land rezoning so the value of land they owned would increase. Dad said he was fired because he was vocal and they controlled the City Council. He was very proud of his actions at that time.]

[Comment by Miyo: I agree!]

IRITANI: And were you able to get into Fresno's . . .

ONO: The way I got into Fresno is that I had a long distance call from Fresno. And they knew that I was fired from Bakersfield. So they called me long distance and asked me if I would come up there to talk to them. So I went up to Fresno to talk to them. They offered me the job, temporary, because I haven't taken the Civil Service exam yet. And then they gave me the exam later, and I came out number one on that and I got the job. But, before all of that

happened, in 1957, I started doing landscape architectural projects up in Fresno. Again, that was an interesting way I got up there. Again, I had a long distance call from Fresno, saying that we would like to talk to you. And they heard about me from an interior decorator who was working up there, who I met before. And so they came down and talked to me and I showed them around. Talked about different jobs and so on. And then I did his house. This was Dr. Mills' house in Fresno. And then after that quite a few others. Then, it started spreading from that point on. Essentially I was traveling up from Bakersfield to Fresno once a week to do the projects in Fresno area.

[Comment by Miyo: I remember Dad said he was also offered a position in Anaheim. We all wanted him to move to Disneyland.]

IRITANI: So you had already established your reputation before they called you to work for the City of Fresno.

ONO: Yes. To start off with, on top of that, the person who happened to be in Fresno knew me because he was a very good friend of the planning director of the City of Bakersfield. And he already knew me. And I worked with him when he was associate planner in City of Fresno. On the general plan, I worked with him. So, he already knew who I was.

IRITANI: So, you'd established your professional credentials.

ONO: Credentials before hand, because I was working with him already.

IRITANI: And then when did you actually go up to Fresno?

ONO: This was in 1963, I went up to Fresno. It was actually during labor day. No, Columbus Day. I went up there during Columbus Day in '63, we moved the whole family up to Fresno. In fact, it was very interesting because, I had the job already assigned, then I came back and picked up the family. We went up to Fresno. I think it was on Friday we went up to Fresno. I talked to some of the realtors in Fresno, to see where there was a place I could rent or buy, either way. And I had the whole family there, and what the kids were interested in was the place up there that happened to have a swimming pool and Steve was interested because it happened to have a pretty good sized tree that he could climb. And that's what we bought. The swimming pool and that tree.
[Chuckle]

[Comment by Miyo: I remember falling into the very cold pool when we moved there.]

IRITANI: And your kids were great, great swimmers.

[Comment by Miyo: We swam as a family at the Bakersfield City College pool occasionally before we moved to 2116 E. Courtland in Fresno.]

[Comment by Steve: I remember swimming lessons at Bakersfield College around age 8 or 9, 1962-63.]

[Comment by Vicki: I was five and couldn't swim at all. We all went through YMCA swim lessons. Dad encouraged us all to "finish" which meant to take the lifeguard's class. We all finished through lifeguard.]

ONO: Yeah. They loved swimming. So that's what we bought. Then I put them on the train and they came back to Bakersfield on the train and I stayed up there for the A.I.P. meeting, American Institute of Planners meeting in Fresno, because I was already a member of the American Institute of Planners.

IRITANI: And then you began your work in Fresno.

ONO: And then I began my work in Fresno. I think it was a Monday or Tuesday, as a temporary worker. And because I was already on the staff as temporary, I was able to borrow the money and go through FHA, buy the house and everything. All in the one whole weekend.

[Comment by Steve: One of Dad's early projects for the City of Fresno was an analysis of the then proposed Fashion Fair Mall. In his report, he stated that the Mall at its projected size would seriously threaten the economy of downtown Fresno. The City reduced the size of the Shopping Mall and delayed the decline of the downtown by ten years or so.

His design hand is everywhere in Fresno: The curvy sidewalks with landscaping around Fashion Fair, the park-like transformer box cabins at the corner of every school, Woodland Park, Meux House, and the Landscape and Signage regulations of Shaw Avenue between California State University, Fresno and West Avenue. These regulations were complained about by the business people of Shaw Avenue consistently right up to the time

the first business landscape article appeared in Sunset Magazine. They then got on board the green bandwagon. Yoneo Ono was one of the primary forces behind the greening of Fresno and he was Tree Fresno's Godfather.

Dad said "It's amazing what you can accomplish (politically) if you don't need to claim credit for it", meaning he would use local politicians as strawmen to get his projects through the process. They get the credit, he gets the job done!]

IRITANI: And your experiences in Fresno, your work, of course. But in addition, just like you were involved with the Carver Community [Center] and with the YMCA and with other organizations in Bakersfield, you were involved in various organizations, volunteering. . .

[Comment by Vicki: I asked Mom about Dad's volunteering. She said Dad encouraged First United Methodist Church to get involved with exchange students. She said he was always here and there volunteering for something. I remember when I was 7 or 8, 1965 or 66, the church had an exchange student from Haiti. The next year a girl came from Korea. Our family hosted a student from Switzerland for a year in 1971-72, and a student from France in 72-73. Over the years we hosted students from seven different countries for periods of three weeks to one year. All without compensation. Dad encouraged all three of us kids to go overseas for a year, which we all did.]

ONO: Yes. You see, at that time, it was an activity going on in Visalia.

IRITANI: When did you start that [involvement]?

ONO: Oh, that was the first six houses that were built on the Self Help program, which was started before the Self Help Enterprises incorporated.

IRITANI: Well, when did you get involved with it?

ONO: In that same year.

IRITANI: What year?

ONO: That was in 1965 I got involved in it. But they started in 1962 under the American Friends Service Committee. Originally. And they built these six houses. What the American Friends Service Committee was using was, they were using money from OEO

IRITANI: Office of. . .

ONO: Economic Opportunity was paying for the technical assistance and the loan was coming from the Farmers Home Administration. And then in February of 1965, They incorporated as Self Help Enterprise, and became an entity by itself, funded by OEO, and the loans were coming out of the Farmers Home Administration. Where I started on that project from was in Fresno itself. I went to the meeting in Fresno. I formed the organization in Fresno, what they called committee meeting. A Fresno county committee organization for the Self Help Enterprise, and then I became the chairman of it right away. After the first meeting.

IRITANI: When you were doing all that, it was strictly as a volunteer?

ONO: As a volunteer, right.

IRITANI: All your activities with the Self Help program. . .

ONO: Always been a volunteer.

IRITANI: Volunteer activity.

ONO: Never been paid.

IRITANI: No pay.

ONO: Then with that organization, because I was the county chairman, I was on the selection committee of the staffing of the county office in Fresno for Self Help Enterprise. And then. . . so I selected the first county staff in Fresno County. See this was. . . Self Help Enterprise only existed in Visalia [Tulare County] at that time. And then I brought it up to Fresno. So they started in Fresno, and we developed the first county staff [Fresno County], and started buying the first piece of land and all that stuff. Getting the whole thing to work together.

IRITANI: And it was always in a rural. . .

ONO: Rural community. It had to be in a rural community because in order to use the Farmers Home Administration money, it had to be in a rural community. By definition, rural, which meant any community smaller than 12,000. And that was the definition of rural. So I hired the county staff. In fact, I was on the selection board which hired the county staff.

IRITANI: And Visalia was in Tulare County. . .

ONO: It was in Tulare County and that was the headquarters. Then the county. . .

IRITANI: You're talking about Fresno County?

ONO: Fresno County committee said I should go down to Visalia and become part of the Self Help Board. And so I was nominated and elected to the Self Help Board in Visalia. So I went to Visalia. And by that time, what happened to OEO was, this is '65, by '67. . . when was the election, '68. By 1968. . . that's right the election was '68. . . by 1968, the Nixon Administration came in and OEO was disbanded.

IRITANI: Oh, really?

ONO: So therefore, now I was in a different situation. By that time, I was vice chairman of the Self Help Enterprise Board. The second in command. And the person who was the chairman, didn't have the freedom to move his ideas. So therefore, often I was the one selected to go to the various meetings in Washington [D.C.] as well as in the state office, in order to convince the Farmers Home Administration to fund the technical assistance funding. So I was involved in that, in getting that changeover.

IRITANI: So you traveled to Washington, you got some traveling funds from. . .

ONO: Traveling funds were all paid for by Self Help Enterprise. All I had to do was make sure that I could take vacation time with the City of Fresno. On top of that, the director of the Planning section.

IRITANI: The planning section of the City of Fresno?

ONO: The City of Fresno, because I was planning an inspection, he said, "I'd like for you to stay on that board and do some good. So anytime you need time off, just tell me and I'll work it all out for you."

IRITANI: So he worked with the schedule that you had to do all this volunteer work.

ONO: Right.

IRITANI: That's amazing. Some boss would do that for . . .

ONO: So all I had to do, in order to keep it level, just put it down as vacation time, and take off anytime you want. A half a day, or a whole day, or whatever you want. So, that's what I did. I was able to do that. Traveled all over.

IRITANI: And at that time was it also called this Rural Community Assistance. . .

ONO: No, the Rural Community Assistance Corporation did not exist at that time. It was only Self Help Enterprise. In fact, Self Help Enterprise was the first one of that type of organization that started in the United States, period.

IRITANI: The one in Visalia was.

ONO: Again, you have to remember that the self help technique is nothing new as far as the United States is concerned. The first one that was done with residential was in Indiana, I think, was in 1938 by the American Friends Service Committee. Again, at that time

it was working with middle income families who could afford to buy houses and so on. But can't afford to put the down payment down, because you have to save the down payment in order to put that down. And another history behind that is that this self help and groups of people getting together and building anything is called barn-raising in American history. And that's all it was. Taking the old barn-raising concept and build it into families.

IRITANI: And incorporating the project, eventually.

ONO: And that's where it comes from, originally. The idea, it's nothing new. It's just a new application of the same thing.

IRITANI: And so you worked with them in Fresno for a long, long time.

ONO: We had a few projects in Fresno. We had a few projects in. . . . Actually Self Help Enterprise serves all the way from Kern County up to Modesto, Stanislaus County. Well, it went partially into San Joaquin County, too. At French Camp area. There's some up there. And then what happened to that organization was that, hey, they started getting into sewer and water. Again the sewer and water started to become available under the Farmers Home Administration. And some of these communities where they happened to have houses, they were on septic tanks. With the sewer and water capability, we decided to go on to applying for the sewer and water grants, and so on, and building that type of facilities. The infrastructure of a community. And then there was a request for other places wanting to know, how do you do this?

They were coming to Self Help Enterprise. How do you get the thing organized and so on. So, because of all these requests, how do you get this organized and so on, we decided to form the RCAC which is Rural Community Assistance Corporation, to actually perpetuate the teaching of how you do this.

IRITANI: So, that's why it is now in eleven states, or twelve states.

ONO: Yeah. That's where it is today. Because, originally we started out with essentially California, Idaho, Nevada, and Arizona. It was very small. That's where we started. But it's grown since then. Nevada pulled out.

IRITANI: Oh, really? Well, they're listed here.

[Comment by Miyo: I think the change in Nevada came in the last few years.

While I lived in Ely, Nevada, Dad talked with a lady who was attempting to get RCAC housing into White Pine County.]

ONO: Then they're back in it again. They pulled out because they thought this is too radical an idea.

IRITANI: And as far as this award, this "Yoneo Ono Award", what year was that?

ONO: That came about after I left the board.

IRITANI: After you left the board.

ONO: After I left the board.

IRITANI: What year was that that you. . .

ONO: That was 1986 or '87, or something like that.

[End Tape 2, Side B]

[Begin Tape 3, Side A]

IRITANI: I would like to begin this tape with the reading of the "Yoneo Ono Award" that had been given through the Rural Community Assistance Corporation.

"Yoneo Ono served for over ten years as a volunteer for Self-Help Enterprises, currently the largest producer of mutual self-help housing in the country. As a volunteer for Self-Help Enterprises, Mr. Ono worked tirelessly to improve the lives of San Joaquin Valley farm workers. He knew how to turn dreams into reality. In 1978, Mr. Ono became one of the founding members of RCAC, Rural Community Assistance Corporation. For his immense contribution to rural development, the RCAC Board of Directors presented him with an award when he retired from the board in 1984, and now presents an annual award in Mr. Ono's honor.

The RCAC Board of Directors uses six key criteria to determine each year's award. The nominations are reviewed by RCAC staffers and submitted to the board of directors for final selection. The winners are honored at a reception held in their community. In our own small way, we hope to encourage further rural volunteer activities by acknowledging the accomplishments of a select few."

And I think this is wonderful to recognize people who

volunteer these rural activities. I think it's wonderful.

Now, you are up in Redding [living with daughter Vicki, her husband Chuck Spotts, and grandson Nathan], did you do something more before you went to Redding? Were you active in other organizations, too, in Fresno area.

ONO: No. In the Fresno area I kind of more or less retired.

[Comment by Vicki: Dad had his first stroke on December 8, 1980, my birthday. His left side was paralyzed. He couldn't even sit up. He was unable to walk at all. Through physical therapy and absolute determination, Dad learned to walk again by Christmas. On Sunday, I took him to church and got the wheelchair out for him. He refused to get in. He walked with his limp, very slowly, the long way from the parking lot to church. By the time we got inside, we were 15 minutes late. As we entered, all became quiet and then Dad got a standing ovation and many people cried. It was very moving. As a result of his determination, Dad was dismissed from physical therapy several months early.

Dad retired from the City of Fresno after his sick leave was used up. He had over a year's saved up. He didn't actually work after his stroke.

He said he was "kind of more or less retired", but, he actually was still an active volunteer. In addition to the RCAC, Dad was on the Fresno County Mental Health Advisory Board, was a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners,

American Society of Landscape Architects, and the Society of American Foresters. Dad was invited to go to China in 1985 as a delegate to advise cities on the use of street trees to help control pollution. He promoted "urban forests." Dad also volunteered to grade the irrigation portions of the State licensing exams for the State Board of Landscape Architects. As I recall, he was busier after he retired, and often travelling.]

IRITANI: And this took up a lot of your time, your volunteer time. And then you retired and then after some time you moved up to Redding.

ONO: In '84 [after retirement], I started this business in Fresno which itself took a lot of time. Because, first of all, Steve Jacoby was a friend of mine. His mother was an early self-helper I hired. Self-Help Enterprises, the organizer who put the family together, and that was Martha Jacoby, and I hired her, and through her I met the whole family. They had a family of three kids. And Steve was the only son. And he's the one that I more or less. . . he asked me what landscape architect was. He used to work for Fresno Guarantee, and they were to build a new building and they had all these plans that has a name of landscape architect also. So he wanted to know more about it, and I told him more about it. What he had to do in order to get there. And so he went to Cal Poly [San Luis Obispo] and graduated from Cal Poly. In fact, his senior year at Cal Poly, he won the award that Cal Poly has a

student. . . what-you-call-it. . . something award put out by this woman architect, who had her name on it. And then when he graduated in '84, we opened the office, he did all the work. I had the license. I put the office together. Part of my time was kind of instructing because one of the requirements for the landscape architect, besides having the degree, you had to have two years' experience under a licensed person.

[Comment by Steve: Dad adopted Steve Jacoby in spirit, if not in flesh. And Steve wasn't the only one. I had many other boyhood friends whose fathers had left. Dad treated them great and taught them well. One in particular, Kirk, had a history of minor criminal problems. He went camping and fishing with Dad and myself for several years in our early teens. Kirk showed up again in 1982 on the maintenance staff of St. Agnes Hospital as Dad was going in for bypass surgery. He was talking about his kids and their camping trips.]

IRITANI: Oh, under a licensed person.

ONO: That's right. So therefore, when we did the first project in Clovis, we did the downtown Clovis project, and we put the whole downtown Clovis project together. And that was a million and quarter project. So he found out how to do specifications, and how do you draw plans. In fact the drawings were 88 pages of drawing. . . sheets of drawing, besides a book about an inch and a half thick for specification contract document. So that's how he

was trained. Not only that, there were a few others that were also there with us. You know, finished Cal Poly, but not licensed because they had nowhere to train for that.

[Comment by Steve: The "Old Town Clovis" redevelopment and design has yielded an Antique Store, Retail, and Entertainment District with a vacancy rate of 10% or less and a business day from dawn to 2:00 a.m. A Friday night Farmers Market draws thousands of people each week every summer.]

IRITANI: So, you trained a number of the young people.

ONO: People. Right.

IRITANI: And of course, in the meantime, you had these strokes. And your other health problems.

ONO: Well, I had strokes before then. Yeah. I had bypass surgery, already.

IRITANI: You had your quadruple bypass. About what year was that?

ONO: That was 1982. '84 I started the office [after retirement].

[Comment by Vicki: Dad had his first quadruple bypass surgery in July or August of 1982. He retired from the RCAC Board when he opened Ono Design Group with Steve Jacoby in 1984.]

[Comment by Steve: Dad suffered a major angina attack in 1977 or 78, too. This was the first cardiac event.]

IRITANI: Even if you had that kind of problem, you went ahead. . .

ONO: Well, it never stopped. . . . It didn't affect how I think. What I already knew was still there. It didn't affect that part of it.

IRITANI: Okay, and so, how many surgeries have you had? You started with the stroke. . .

ONO: The stroke, in 1980, I had the stroke. In 1982, I had a quadruple bypass. 1990, I had the carotid arteries cleaned out. And that's when I went up to Redding.

[Comment by Vicki: The carotid artery stroke was April 1, 1991. He had no speech for about two days, but regained most of it back.]

[Comment by Miyo: Before this surgery he was slowly showing signs of impaired thinking, reasoning.]

IRITANI: And Vicki and Chuck Spotts were already up there.

ONO: Well, he got the job up there at Shasta [Community] College.

IRITANI: Right. He teaches math up at Shasta College.

ONO: Then in 1992, I had a quadruple bypass up in Redding. And it's been a little over five years since the last quadruple bypass. Now, I'm on the board of California Irrigation Institute.

IRITANI: And what do you have to do for that?

ONO: Oh, I usually go to the meetings, put the conferences together. Annual conferences.

IRITANI: And where do they usually meet?

ONO: Sacramento and Fresno.

IRITANI: But that's for irrigation.

ONO: Yeah. That's with the irrigation. Technologies. It's more or less an educational organization. Trying to perpetuate the information as to where the irrigation technology is today in both

the urban area and agriculture. It's mostly in agriculture. I was the first one of the urban area to get in, then we changed some of the directions of getting into the urban irrigation. How do you handle the urban irrigation instead of wasting water?

IRITANI: Well, I don't even think of irrigation in urban areas. I think of it as a farm activity.

ONO: Yeah. That's how most people think of it. But you see, the golf course is as big as a farm is. Cemeteries are bigger than farm areas. And tremendous amount of water goes down there.

IRITANI: And how to use it.

ONO: How do you design it and how do you operate it in order to use the least amount of water, and have the most value and so on, and keep the value up of the green or the lawn.

[Comment by Vicki: Dad promoted the use of subsurface drip irrigation because it doesn't waste water and it helps prevent mineral buildup.]

IRITANI: And so you still attend those meetings?

ONO: Yes, uh huh. I'm still on the Board. In fact, I served the first four years, and now I'm on the second set of four years.

IRITANI: Are you on some other local or [inaudible] right now?

ONO: No. That's enough now.

[Comment by Vicki: Dad wanted to be more involved, but had no transportation in Redding. He did have Dial-a-ride for about 1

year and was getting involved, then it was cut. He did write numerous letters to the county with ideas.]

[Comment by Miyo: He asked to help with the Arboretum. He did landscape plans for private homes using a computer program while in Redding.]

IRITANI: That's it now. You've cut back.

ONO: Right.

IRITANI: You've had to. You're not driving any more.

ONO: No, I stopped driving after the. . .

IRITANI: But healthwise everything is pretty stable, you just have to watch what you are eating. [He had diabetes.] We all know that.

ONO: Watch that and watch the exercise. I usually go exercise every day [at the gym] when I'm up there in Redding.

IRITANI: So Redding has been a good home for you.

ONO: Met a lot of seniors up there.

IRITANI: You want to tell us about Frances right now and what the children are doing?

ONO: Oh, the children. . . . Frances right now is in a board and care home in Fresno. She has a very hard time. In fact, she became schizophrenic, paranoid schiz. And she's in a board and care home with care where they handled the medication for her, and they get her food and everything together.

[Comment by Steve: Frances first presented psychotic symptoms in 1965 when I was just ending elementary school. With a great deal of

help from First Methodist Church friends, Dad was basically a single parent from that point on with mom assisting as much as she could in her more lucid periods. She spent the better part of two years in County and State Mental Hospitals. In the 1970s, after a major Supreme Court decision, Mom decided to stop her medication and began a long agonizing slide back into delusion. Dad coped with her illness while getting Miyo and Vicki through high school and doing his city and volunteer work.]

ONO: Steve's in the field of music. He teaches music as well as he had a contract with the state at Corcoran State Prison, one time. And he's doing music promotion and cutting CDs and all kinds of stuff.

[Comment by Steve: Steve Ono is a Guitar and Music Teacher in Fresno and Clovis. He is a 1980 graduate of the Guitar Institute of Technology in Hollywood and has several students and former students in award winning Junior and Senior high school Jazz Bands. Steve maintains a full personal performance schedule as well.]

IRITANI: And Steve is married and has no children. Married to Ellen Rowan.

[Comment by Vicki: Steve has four step-children including a twelve year old, Dylann, who lives in Fresno and attends school in Tennessee.]

IRITANI: And then Miyoko. . .

ONO: Miyo lives in Henderson which is right next to Las Vegas and [husband] Robert is a CPA . He is a partner for Kafoury, Armstong

& Co., the largest CPA firm in Nevada. The state of Nevada. Part of the system. And then Vicki. . .

IRITANI: Well, before we get to Vicki, Robert and Miyoko Moore have two children. Colin. . .

ONO: Colin and Kikumi.

IRITANI: Colin is about how old now?

ONO: Colin was born April 19, 1983. And Kikumi, May 23, 1985.

IRITANI: And then Vicki [Spotts].

ONO: Vicki. She's up there in Redding. She's a kindergarten teacher.

IRITANI: And she just started that.

ONO: Just started kindergarten.

IRITANI: Although she has been part-time kindergarten teacher until this year.

ONO: Yeah. She was teaching with another teacher. Before then, she was also working with gifted children in one of the elementary schools.

IRITANI: And [husband] Chuck is. . .

ONO: And Chuck teaches at Shasta College and he teaches mathematics at Shasta College, although his Bachelors degree is in geology. But his Masters is in mathematics.

IRITANI: And then Nathan?

ONO: And Nathan is a little fifth grader. And in the Boy Scouts. In fact, finally got into the Boy Scouts this year. He was in Cub Scouts for many years.

IRITANI: And what other activities are you active with up there?

ONO: Chuck up there, he also has Shotokan Karate. Teaching that.

IRITANI: As far as your activities are concerned, it's a daily physical exercise.

ONO: Daily physical exercise. I learned how to do all the drafting and so on, on the computer, so whatever projects I get up there, I usually have one a year, and that's about it. Or maybe less.

IRITANI: But you don't have to follow through with the actual construction with any of your projects?

ONO: Sometimes I have to follow through. Get the construction documents together for other people to bid on it. But then I have to supervise. Observe. Observation that's it. But a lot of them are design. Just planting design. That's about it.

IRITANI: And are you still doing the designing?

ONO: Yes. In fact, I just finished one project. Right now it's under construction. The home owner is constructing it. It's a very interesting story there, because, he works for the police department of San Francisco. In July of this year, he'll be retiring from the police department of San Francisco. She was a surgical nurse in San Francisco. They went up to Redding to find a place because they wanted to retire up there. So they found the place and the first hospital she went to, she gave her qualification, and she got hired on her first visit. So she's looking at the hospital, and he's finishing up at the police department. He's a police department photographer in the section that gathers information.

And so therefore, they found out about him, that he's going to be retiring up there, and Shasta College has offered him a part-time job, whenever he wants to come in and teach, because they would like to have somebody who has that experience teaching a course.

IRITANI: And so you're doing their house.

ONO: Just doing the planting. Planting design only. Not the irrigation design. I told them they should contact the supplier. you just take my plans and just contact the supplier and they could just put the irrigation plan based upon what my plan is.

IRITANI: So, what else do we want to talk about now? I think we've covered quite a bit about of your life. Any other wrap up memories?

ONO: Well, the only thing that happened, the last one was that meeting at Seattle. That was just out of the blue. All at once I saw. . . I had a letter from them saying that we'd like to have you come up to Seattle. And I said, "Wow!" [referring to RCAC].

IRITANI: Well, it makes sense for you to be there.

ONO: In fact, at that meeting it's quite interesting because all the people who were on the staff at Self-Help here in. . . staff of RCAC here in Sacramento they all knew all about me, but I didn't know any of them.

[Comment by Miyo: I remember Dad came up to Sacramento when I lived there in 1980-81. He was attending a RCAC meeting.]

IRITANI: You don't get to the Sacramento office, you don't have that kind of contact now.

ONO: Not since I've been off the board.

IRITANI: But, that's your history. That you had that kind of volunteer activities that you participated in. You've done your share for this world, I think. So perhaps I should just close this. Unless you have something more you want to add.

ONO: No.

IRITANI: Your life's philosophy?

ONO: Well, the life philosophy is essentially, hey, we only live once. We are born, and we die. And that's about all life is. And we only have two ends. And between those two points, we have to do something. And my feeling is if you could do something as much as possible, based upon what information that you have, that you could share with others, that's the best thing to do. Which is what I did.

IRITANI: Very good. And so we will close. I think we covered everything. Thank you very much for this time. And this is the end of the interview with Yoneo Ono.

[End Tape 3, Side A]

[End of Interview]

NAMES LIST

NAME	IDENTIFICATION	SOURCE OF VERIFICATION	PAGE INTRODUCED
Tome Suenaga Ono	Mother	Taeko Joanne Iritani	2
George Yoneshiro Ono	Father	"	3
Yonesaburo Suenaga Ono	Father's father	"	3
Joe Minoru Ono	Brother	"	4
Tomi Ono Monji	Sister	"	4
Taeko Joanne Ono Iritani	Sister	"	4
Takashi Ono	Brother	"	4
Tsunezo Kinoshita	Farmer in Bakersfield	"	6
George Tanigaki	Farmer in Bakersfield	"	7
Kohei Tanaka	Owner of Bakersfield Nursery the first nursery in Bakersfield	"	7
Charles Lindbergh	American aviator and author	Webster's new Collegiate Dictionary	11
Commodore Matthew Perry	American naval officer	"	11
Richard E. Byrd	Admiral and polar explorer	"	11
Don Clark	Boy Scout leader	Taeko Joanne Iritani	18
Bobby Clark	Classmate and Boy Scout	"	19
Eunice Mohri	Older Nisei, neighbors	"	24
Florence Mohri	Older Nisei, neighbors	"	24
Shin Tada	Issei church member	"	25
Rev. Dillon Throckmorton	Pastor of Trinity Methodist Church	"	25
Jess Stockton	Kern County High School teacher	"	26
Rev. Fowler	Pastor of Mountain View Church	"	27
Alice Kikuye Konno Cheng	Child of parents' cousin	"	28
Hanaye Konno	Wife of parents' cousin	"	28
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Emma Buckmaster	Sunday School teacher	"	32
Lottie Phillips	Sunday School teacher	"	32
Ben Sanematsu	Poston High School teacher	"	40
Miss Patton	Poston High School teacher	"	42
Ralph Litton	Physical anthropologist and author	Yoneo Ono	43
Woodworth	Experimental psychologist and author	"	43
Jean Jacques Rousseau	Philosopher and writer	Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary	43
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Dr. Alexander Leighton	Director of Sociological Research in Poston	Yoneo Ono	44
Ralph Waldo Emerson	American essayist and poet	Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary	45
Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel	German philosopher	"	46
Fred Ono	Poston High School teacher	Yoneo Ono	46
Nathaniel Hawthorne	American Author	Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary	48
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Frances Eveline Holden Ono	Wife	Taeko Joanne Iritani	63
Rev. Edwin Holden	Father of Frances	Yoneo Ono	64
McIntosh	Professor at Yale Divinity School	"	64
Steven Mead Ono	Son	Taeko Joanne Iritani	65
Madeline Miyoko Ono Moore	Daughter	"	65
Victoria Jeanne Ono Spotts	Daughter	"	66
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NAMES LIST

NAME	IDENTIFICATION	SOURCE OF VERIFICATION	PAGE INTRODUCED
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Nathan Spotts	Son of Vicki and Chuck	"	81
Steve Jacoby	Business partner	Yoneo Ono	82
Martha Jacoby	Self-Help Enterprises staff and mother of Steve Jacoby	Yoneo Ono	82
Ellen Rowan Ono	Wife of son Steve	Taeko Joanne Iritani	88
Robert Moore	Husband of daughter Miyoko	"	88
Colin Moore	Son of Miyoko and Robert Moore	"	89
Kikumi Moore	Daughter of Miyoko and Robert Moore	"	89

Saturday
April 18, 1998
Redding Record Searchlight

Yoneo Ono

REDDING — Services for Yoneo Ono, 72, of Redding will be at 6 p.m. Tuesday at Sun Oaks Fitness Club in Redding. The service will be a potluck party.

Mr. Ono died Thursday, April 16, 1998, at Redding Medical Center.

Born April 25, 1925, in Bakersfield, he moved to Shasta County in 1991 from Fresno.

He was a city planner and landscape architect for the city of Fresno. He was also a member of the American Friends Service Committee in Fresno, the American Institute of Certified Planners

in Fresno, the American Society of Landscape Architects, the National Association of Colored People, the North Fresno Kiwanis Club, the Clovis Rotary Club, the Re-Development Agency of Fresno, the Fresno Community Mental Health Advisory Board, the California Irrigation Institute in Fresno, the Ecumenical Ministries Council in Fresno, the Interned Japanese-American World War II Relocation Center Association in Poston, Ariz., the American Society of Public Administrators, the Society of American Foresters, was co-founder of Self Help Enterprises in Visalia, co-founder of Rural Community Assistance Corporation in Sacramento, was urban planner for 22 years in Kern County, and instructor at Bakersfield College, Fresno College and Fresno State College, and was a member of the Japanese-American Cultural Community Center in Fresno, was on the International Christian Youth Exchange Committee in Fresno and was founder of the Evergreen Nursery in Bakersfield.

Survivors include wife Frances; son Steven of Fresno; daughters Miyoko Ono-Moore of Henderson, Nev., and Vicki Spotts of Redding; brothers Joe of Hilo, Hawaii, and Tak of Bakersfield; sister Tomi Monji of Atascadero and Joann Taeko Iritani of Sacramento; and three grandchildren.

Arrangements are being handled by Allen & Dahl Funeral Chapel in Palo Cedro.

LOCAL NEWS

Dinner set to remember Yoneo Ono

■ Man, who died recently at age 72, was noted Fresno-area landscape architect.

By Charles McCarthy
The Fresno Bee

A memorial potluck dinner for Yoneo Ono, 72, of Redding, a longtime Fresno-area landscape architect, will be held from 4 to 8 p.m. Saturday in the Forestiere Underground Gardens.

Mr. Ono died April 16 in Redding, where he had lived since 1991.

He was a landscape architect for the city of Fresno from the mid-1960s until he retired in 1981. Among his projects during that time, relatives said, was designing the landscaping along Shaw Avenue between Blackstone and Cedar avenues and along Freeway 41 north of Ventura Street.

After retiring from the city of Fresno, Mr. Ono founded his own design group in Clovis. He

is credited with helping to redesign the city's Old Town District.

He also taught courses in landscape design and maintenance at Bakersfield College, Fresno City College and California State University, Fresno.

In 1978, Mr. Ono helped found the Rural Community Assistance Corporation.

One of that organization's awards has been named in his honor.

Mr. Ono earned a degree in sociology and landscape architec-

ture from the University of Connecticut.

He was an American Friends Service Committee lecturer, talking about his experiences from 1942 to 1944 in an Arizona internment camp for Americans of Japanese ancestry.

He was a native of Bakersfield.

Survivors include his wife, Frances Eveline; a son, Steven of Fresno; and two daughters, Miyoko Ono-Moore of Nevada and Vicki Spotts of Redding.

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May 5, 1998



ACKNOWLEDGING RURAL VOLUNTEERS
YONEO ONO AWARD



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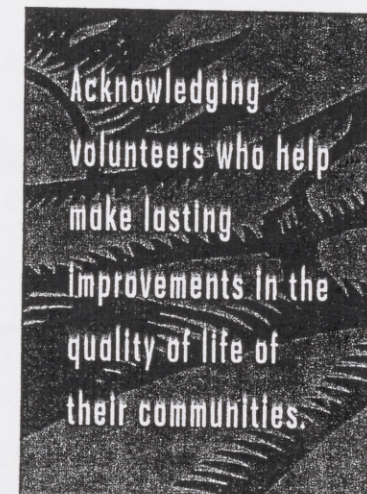
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The Yoneo Ono Award

Yoneo Ono served for over ten years as a volunteer for Self-Help Enterprises, currently the largest producer of mutual self-help housing in the country. As a volunteer for Self-Help Enterprises, Mr. Ono worked tirelessly to improve the lives of San Joaquin Valley farm workers. He knew how to turn dreams into reality. In 1978, Mr. Ono became one of the founding members of RCAC. For his immense contribution to rural development, the RCAC Board of Directors presented him with an award when he retired from the board in 1984, and now presents an annual award in Mr. Ono's honor.

The RCAC Board of Directors uses six key criteria to determine each year's award. The nominations are reviewed by RCAC staffers and submitted to the board of directors for final selection. The winners are honored at a reception held in their community. In our own small way, we hope to encourage further rural volunteer activities by acknowledging the accomplishments of a select few.



Welcome friends and family
to a Celebration of Life
in honor of Yoneo Ono

In discussing his wishes for a memorial service recently,
Yoneo was very clear about how he wanted to be remembered.

"I want a party," he said, "a pot luck."

He wanted eating and dancing and Making Merry.

He wanted lots of laughter and interesting conversation.

He wanted us to remember him in death as we enjoyed him in life -
smiling, happy, and "foraging" for good food and good talk.
and so. . .

We ask you to join us in celebrating a quiet life with a huge impact,
a man of few words who spoke volumes,
a man of modest means who enriched us all.

"It's amazing what you can accomplish, if you don't have to take credit for it."
Yoneo Ono

It certainly is.

Yoneo Ono

25 April 1925 - 16 April 1998

A Celebration of Life



ONO FAMILY HISTORY

As related over many years by our mother
Tome Suenaga Ono
and recollections of Taeko Joanne Ono Iritani

In Fukushima Ken (Prefecture), Japan, the Ono family originated from the Suenaga family of Shinobu Gun (county). There are fourteen generations listed in the Suenaga family tree compiled by our cousin Junichi Suenaga in Japan. Our father's father Yonesaburo Suenaga, the second son in his family, took the last name of Ono upon his marriage to a distant cousin, Kura, whose family had no male heirs. Kura's family had a small, financially struggling store in their area of Date Gun of Fukushima Ken. Yonesaburo and Kura had two boys and one child on the way, when in 1899, Yonesaburo decided to join the many young men who sought their fortune in America. We were told that he immigrated first to Hawaii, but have no idea when he later went to Bakersfield, California. While working on the history of the Japanese Methodist Episcopal Mission Church, I found his name in the 1907 *Bakersfield City Directory* among the residents of the Santa Fe Railroad dormitory. The following year, all non-business Japanese and Chinese names were excluded from the Directory. Our father, Yoneshiro Ono, was born on January 2, 1900 in Date Gun (County) of Fukushima Ken.

In Shinobu Gun, the Suenaga family was headed by Keisaburo, the eldest son who inherited the family farm. He was the elder brother of Yonesaburo, and his wife Tae was a first cousin of Kura, the wife of Yonesaburo. Our mother, the eighth child of Keisaburo and Tae, was born on April 25, 1903, and was named Tome, which means to stop. When the older siblings learned what the child had been named, they decided to call the child by the nickname of *Take* (bamboo) instead. Three years later, there was then the ninth child, and since the older siblings liked the name of *Take*, the father decided to name this child *Take*. However, the siblings then called this youngest child Tome, stop. So, throughout their childhood, Tome and *Take* were called by the other child's name. Our mother and I went to Japan in 1954, and visited the three living siblings, eldest brother Hiroichi, and sisters Fuyu and the now re-named *Take*. They all laughed about the childhood mix-up of the names. The sisters took their legal names back as adults, perhaps because our mother had to register her legal name on her passport.

The Ono and Suenaga families were related with the fathers being brothers and the mothers being cousins. So the Ono family often visited the Suenaga family home. Yoneshiro and Tome played together as children and he helped with the work on the farm. Another cousin who visited the family home was Susumu Konno whose mother was the sister of Keisaburo and Yonesaburo. Our mother remembered catching fish and crayfish in the little creek, which they called river (*kawa*), listening to and catching cicadas (*semi*), and catching fireflies in the summers as very young children. When we visited Japan in 1954, I heard the cicadas and watched the flickering fireflies for the first time. How lovely it was.

Neither Suenaga nor Ono family was wealthy, or even comfortable, financially. The Suenaga grandfather had squandered much of what the family did have, and our mother often related how very poor the family was. Tears would well up in her eyes as she related how she made her dolls out of rags and whatever cloth she could find, or of the trip to the local temple on a festival day when she was unable to buy even a one sen (cent) toy. The family was very poor. She attended the local elementary school completing grade six. She related how she was always among the top students in her class, but when it came time to distribute the special awards, the children of the community leaders were the recipients and not she. This was always related in a poignant and resentful manner, even when she was in her eighties. Adults do not forget traumas and deliberate slights of their childhood.

In 1916, at age 13 following graduation from the sixth grade, Tome was sent to work at Hiraishi, a silkworm farm which was considered prosperous because the family owned a mountain on which mulberry trees were planted and wood was readily available. Her job was to prepare the meals for the family and their workers, and to care for an orphaned infant, Shiro-chan. She worked for the privilege of learning to work, and took sewing lessons from a neighborhood sewing teacher. She received no pay during these years. Our mother always spoke fondly of the family and the work on this silkworm farm. She often related the activity in the production of the silk--picking and feeding the young mulberry leaves to the worms; putting the cocoons into the hot water and quickly winding the silk threads onto the large wheels with her left hand while the right hand used chopsticks to gently and quickly release the strand of silk thread. She was very proud of her proficiency at this job. Her day began very early each morning with the hauling of buckets of water from the well to the cooking area. (In fact, in walking to the well she slipped on the icy walkway, and her tailbone had been pushed up, so sitting for long periods in one position was always uncomfortable for her.) She made the rice in a large iron cooking pot and prepared the breakfast, so when the family members and workers took their morning break, their breakfast of rice and *misoshiru* soup and pickled vegetables would be ready. In addition, she tended to the needs of Shiro-chan. She made the milk substitute and carried him on her back throughout the day as she went about doing her assigned work. She had a bite mark on her shoulder left by little Shiro-chan. He became an officer in the Japanese Army and sent many photos to our mother in America. During the Japanese military aggression of Burma, Shiro died in battle.

Yoneshiro, in the meantime had completed eighth grade in his Date Gun elementary school. In 1918, at age 18, he joined his father in America. He was a *Yobiyose*, a person who is called by a relative. He met his father for the first time in San Francisco and joined his father and other Japanese immigrants working for the Santa Fe Railroad, cleaning cars. Before leaving Japan, he had promised his mother to send his father back to Japan as soon as he could. So, everyone at the railyard gave their overtime work to Yoneshiro.

His name was now George Yoneshiro Ono. We do not know the circumstances of the addition of George to his name. He attended Franklin Grammar School near the Santa Fe dormitory, and went from first through sixth

grades in a very short time, perhaps just one year's time. At the reception following our mother's memorial service, a gentleman introduced himself as our father's grammar school classmate. He remembered George as their class big brother who helped everyone. After all, George was age 18 and his classmates were very young and small. He was very popular with his ability to draw for the children.

Around 1921, Tome completed her work at Hiraishi, the silkworm farm, and returned home. There she learned that her uncle Yonesaburo had returned from America. She went to see him in the hospital where he was gravely ill with the Spanish flu. He died soon after. Tome also then caught the flu, was very ill, and lost all her hair. But, she survived. I recall her saying that she did not mind losing all her hair although her old aunties felt sorry for her because she was so young. She said she must not have looked very pretty, but it was all right.

She recovered from the flu and continued her work at home. Everything a young girl was taught, was for the purpose of her becoming a bride. "*Yome ni iku kara.*" She was always told, "*Koseki toohon wo yogosu na.!*" "Do not soil the family register which was kept in the community hall. Every action of the family members is recorded in the "*Koseki toohon.*" Everything she learned was to be able to care for her own household and to accede to the wishes of her in-laws. Of course, our mother need not have worried about her in-laws because she left them and her family behind in Japan in June of 1924.

July 1, 1924, the United States Immigration Act, or Oriental Exclusion Act became effective. With the picture bride route of marriage no longer available, our father returned to Japan to seek a bride in 1923 or early 1924. His mother had already chosen her cousin's child, Tome, to be her daughter-in-law because she had seen her diligent work habits. Our father, mother and her younger sister, *Take*, went to Tokyo to complete all the paperwork necessary for passage to the United States. This was the first trip to Tokyo for the two women. Our parents were married in May and they arrived by ship in Seattle in June, less than a month before the exclusion was to begin. Our mother marveled at the way the women in America were dressed, because all she had were her kimonos. Our father bought a wool dress for her in Seattle, and when she arrived in Bakersfield on the train, she said the dress was so hot and so itchy.

They began their married life living in various places--George Tatsuno recalled that they lived at one time in a small house behind his house. Photographs also show Yoneo as a toddler walking near the church when they lived on "O" Street. And of course, by the time I arrived, we were living in Tupman where our father was the gardener for Standard Oil Company. We were all born at the Victory Hospital on 19th Street in Bakersfield. (Many Nisei have told me they were born at home with midwives assisting their mother at birth.)

We attended the Japanese Methodist Episcopal Mission Church every Sunday and Wednesday nights. The Issei always referred to the church as "Mission" with a Japanese accent, or "*Mee Kyokai*" which I always thought was a Japanese word. It merely represented the initials of Methodist Episcopal with a Japanese accent. Our mother told stories of the harrowing drive in the open air car from Tupman on foggy nights with four little children huddled in the back seat. And she explained

why our father became a Christian instead of remaining a Buddhist, the religion of his family in Japan. Neither she nor our father received any religious educational training in Buddhism in Japan. The temple in the Shinobu Gun area was considered their family temple. I remember all the monkeys that were in the trees of the temple grounds during our 1954 visit. She said, you married in a Shinto ceremony, and funerals were conducted in a Buddhist ceremony.

At one point in his early years of learning about farming, our father went on the migrant workers' circuit. He found that the men who were able to save some money were those who did not drink or gamble. And so he became friends with those whose lives he wished to imitate. Among his great friends was Susumu Kuwano who was just a laborer also, at that time. Later, Susumu Kuwano went to seminary, became a minister in the Methodist church, and served many years at Brawley, California where he was the Japanese language teacher. Rev. Kuwano was taken by the FBI soon after World War II began with all other Japanese language teachers, and was imprisoned at Bismarck, North Dakota by the Justice Department. Post war, Rev. Kuwano served many churches, including Loomis Japanese Methodist Church which has an Issei Hall and a Kuwano Hall named in his honor. Correspondence and photographs were exchanged with Rev. and Mrs. Kuwano, even in the 1980s.

Our mother related the events of the marriage of Susumu Kuwano and Kimi Goto of Fresno in the mid 1920s. They were married in Bakersfield with our father as Best Man. When it came time to register the marriage, it was discovered that the license had been issued in Fresno and not Kern County. Our father drove the newlyweds to Fresno so their marriage could be properly recorded. This story was always told with a good deal of humor.

As Yoneo related in his Oral History Interview, our father was learning farming and was actively interested in all things athletic. So, our mother was often left alone with her baby or babies. She said sometimes she wondered why she even came to America. Perhaps she should have stayed in Japan. But, with one baby after another, she had little time to feel sorry for herself. We were born in April 1925, December 1926, February 1928, September 1929, and September 1932. Takashi, her last child, was born when she was age twenty nine.

Having lived through a very poor childhood and later the depression years of the 1930s, our mother was very frugal. She was especially careful to mend her clothes, sheets, everything. All her socks were well mended as her granddaughters will remember. All her cotton slips had additional panels sewn in. In fact, I remember being scolded for throwing away some clothes which could have been repaired. I had to show her how the fabric itself was well worn and not just torn and reparable. And, of course, all my sheets should have been cut in half and sewn together so the worn center was then on the outside edge. By her account, I was extremely wasteful. And, perhaps I was. Although I, too, had lived through the depression years, I never thought we were poor. Compared to my classmates from Oklahoma, Arkansas, and other dust bowl areas who lived in tents, we were quite comfortable, I guess. We always had plenty of food in my childhood and our father always bought crates of oranges. I still fondly remember our mother's cottage

pudding with a special sauce on it. It just was not like the ordinary bread puddings I can buy in the restaurants now. And I never knew that I should have more than a few dresses which our mother had sewn. Washed when dirty, dried in the sun, and ironed, and a few dresses seemed to be enough.

Our mother often related how she washed the clothes before she got the washing machine in the late 1930s. The large galvanized tubs were filled with water, and a fire was lit under the tubs. The clothes were hand scrubbed on the wash board, or if the clothes such as heavy jeans were very dirty, they were boiled in the tub. Of course, the entire wash was rinsed and wrung out by hand, and hung on the lines to dry. As I remember, there were many wire clothes lines for drying in the hot sun. The washing machine which was bought in the late 1930s had a washing tub with agitator and a smaller spin drying tub which wrung the water from the clothes. We still had to carry the wash to the lines to be hung. Tomi and I helped to hang the wash to dry, even the heavy double bed sheets.

Among my other chores was to make the rice in those pre-rice cooker days. I'm afraid I burned the rice when I was busy listening to some radio soap operas such as "Amanda of Honeymoon Hill." I also had the job of making the fire for the large bathtub. The bathhouse was right behind our back door. The tub was metal, approximately 2' x 5' x 2' deep, with a wooden raft which we sat on so we would not get burned. We washed ourselves before entering the tub, and then we were able to have a wonderfully relaxing soaking time. The tub was large enough to accomodate more than one person. It was the greatest bath!

Another chore was to fix the broken lug boxes and crates. I became very proficient at straightening nails and hammered pretty well for a little girl. We made sleds with the ends of the melon crates in order to move the crates and boxes easily from place to place. The lug boxes were used for packing cucumber, sweet potatoes and yams. These were picked up by the produce truck. I remember big Mr. Joke, a Chinese produce man, who was jovial, but his size scared me. The crates were for packing the melons--first the cantaloupes, then the Persian melons, and then the most delicious white casaba. The yellow casaba sold in the stores now do not begin to compare with the marvelous flavor of our white casaba.

During the long summer evenings after dinner, I recall our sessions playing cards. First it was the simple games of Donkey, Seven-up, and Rummy, and then by the time I was in fifth and sixth grades, it was the much more difficult Five hundred which is similar to bridge. I remember one particular hand that I won after taking a very high no-trump bid. I was elated to play and win against adult competition. After the war, we all spent many hours in the evening playing Canasta, and our mother spent many hours playing solitaire. She especially liked to play solitaire where all the cards are dealt. Winning occurred on very rare occasions, but it did pass the time and she certainly enjoyed it. She also spent many hours writing to her relatives in Japan, using her Japanese dictionary to write the characters correctly.

In his younger years, our father liked athletic competition. and later as we were growing up, he liked children's games. He played hop scotch and jacks with me, and I remember my mother telling him to give me a handicap advantage, but no, he was determined that we play on even terms. Eventually, I was a better jacks

player than he. We also all played the Japanese card game *Karuta* in which an adult reads the ancient poems in a sing-song fashion. Usually our mother or Susumu Konno, our parents' cousin read or recited these poems. We called Mr. Konno *Ojisan* or uncle. He was born in 1904, our mother in 1903, and our father in 1900. In the game of *Karuta*, when the first part of the poem is read, the knowledgeable player immediately taps the card on which is written the ending to the poem. Of course, we did not know the entire poem, so we just waited for the ending portion to be read and located the matching card which was written in *Hiragana*, a simple form of the Japanese phonetic characters. In this way, the Japanese we had learned at the Saturday Japanese language classes at our church were put to use. We attended these classes until war began and the five-mile travel limit was imposed on us.

The church was a very important part of our lives, attending Saturday Japanese language school taught by the current minister, and Sunday School with Emma Buckmaster as my teacher. She came to our church in 1927 and remained with us until her death. During World War II, she, Lottie Phillips and some members of the First and Trinity Methodist Churches formed the Committee to Aid the Japanese Evacuation. In the 1980s I was told by a member of that committee that Trinity Methodist Church had been placed on the House Un-American Activities Committee list for their Christian action in helping the Bakersfield Japanese. The Committee to Aid the Japanese Evacuation had watched over the property of individuals, both the Buddhist and Methodist Churches, and the rental of the little house behind the church. Emma Buckmaster had located and sent articles to us in Poston. She laughed about the fact that she had sent the wrong article for the Buddhist Worship Service, but she got it right on the second try. Emma and Lottie also drove to Poston to meet with the former residents of Bakersfield.

Our father was a leader in our church. I recall when I was about age ten, I accused him of gambling with his money by buying stocks. But he said, "I provide for my family. I give to my church. And this is extra money for my pleasure." As it turned out, the stocks were certainly not a gamble but an investment, and I was surely very wrong. Our father died of a coronary thrombosis on January 8, 1951, just six days after his fifty first birthday. I was a student at UC Berkeley at that time. I was told that the evening before his death, the members had attended a church meeting. He encouraged the Nisei to take over the responsibility for the church, and he gave the older car to the church for the use of the pastor.

Before the war in the early 1930s, our father had purchased the land across the street from the church to be used as the play area of the children. Of course, because of the California Alien Land Law, he was unable to use his own name to make the purchase. He used the name of an older Nisei, and to the end, he helped their family whenever he could, as did our mother after his death. Our father sold this land while we were in camp, because both he and our mother became ill. He had a mild stroke followed by other mild strokes. And after establishing the Evergreen Nursery in 1946 with son Joe, he had more strokes. I recall that the doctor told him

to remain in pajamas and bathrobe which he did, but he went out to greet the customers in that manner.

Our mother, who worked in the Poston Block 19 mess hall carrying very, very heavy trays of cups and plates, had many days of extreme menstrual bleeding in 1944 or 1945, and was forced to confine her movements to the barrack room for long periods. In August of 1945, Tomi and I left Poston to continue our high school education at East Bakersfield High School with the assistance of people at Trinity Methodist Church. Yoneo had left for University of Connecticut following his graduation from Poston High School in 1944, and Joe had moved to Chicago to work following his graduation in June 1945. He was inducted into the army there. The family left in Poston were our parents and Takashi, and cousin Susumu Konno, his wife Hanaye and daughter Kiku who had been born in Bakersfield, November 1940.

Tomi lived with the family of Dr. Gale and I lived with the family of Walter Shore, the E.B. High School Agriculture teacher. They were members of Trinity. In November, Tomi stayed over night with me at the Shores and that night she went to the hospital for an appendectomy. She spent her days recovering at Emma Buckmaster's house. With the assistance of Emma, our parents and the Konnos returned to Bakersfield from Poston, and stayed at our Japanese Church which was now used as a hostel. Our mother accompanied Tomi for a follow-up office visit to the doctor. I was told that the doctor paid little attention to Tomi and focused on our mother who appeared very pale to him. She was hospitalized and had radiation treatment following a hysterectomy. She recovered well from the surgery.

Meanwhile, our father found a farm to rent in the Fruitvale area next to an olive orchard. Joe was discharged after serving only 13 months in the army and assisted with the farming. They found that the work was too difficult for our father and more strokes followed, and Joe and *Obasan*, Mrs. Konno, were allergic to the pollen in the area. So, our father decided to start a nursery in the city, located a house and lot, and went door-to-door in the area so the neighbors knew of his plans. Evergreen Nursery opened in 1947. Our mother, who had limited use of English, learned the names of the plants and how to handle them. She watered plants daily, made new cuttings, especially the azaleas, sold the plants and even carried heavy sacks of fertilizer. Despite her accent, the customers understood her and loved her.

In 1951, our father died. Tomi married Jimmy Monji, Joe married Yuri Hagiwara, and Yoneo married Frances Holden. Taeko Joanne married Frank Iritani in 1956. And the grandchildren began to appear. Michael Monji in 1952, Rodney [Joe's] in 1953, Steve [Yoneo's] in 1954, Duane [Joe's] in 1956, Miyo [Yoneo's] in 1956, Vicki [Yoneo's] in 1957, Susanna Iritani in 1958, Cynthia [Joe's] in 1958, Lindsay [Joe's] in 1959, Ken Iritani in 1960, and Bonita Iritani in 1962. Our mother had a direct hand in helping to raise these children at various times. When Frances was not well, Miyo and Vicki were taken to the nursery regularly when they were very young. When I began teaching, my children came home to *Obaachan*. Whenever one of my children complained of a stomach ache in the morning, I just dropped them off at the nursery and went on to my school. Michael stayed in the backroom at the nursery at one time. We are all indebted to our mother for the love and attention she paid to each of these children. And I'm sure none of them will

forget the envelopes distributed by her every Christmas. And of course, there were those New Year's Day gatherings and the annual photographs taken on the nursery steps. What wonderful memories they conjure up. The times we dressed in kimonos were very special.

Our mother survived her heart attack, and took many trips to Japan. Each year she planted her garden of Japanese vegetables, including the most delicious *kabocha*, Japanese pumpkin. She also made her delicious pomegranate jams, peeled many, many persimmons to dry, and gave away her vegetables to anyone who came visiting. She also continued to attend the Japanese language church services or home meetings. There were only Mrs. Hagiwara, Mrs. Kinoshita and our mother left among the Issei in 1988. While our mother was living at the retirement facility near our home, she had a stroke in November 1988. She was completely immobilized. She had to be moved from wheel chair to bed with no ability to stand on her own. Joe's wife Yuri had died in September of that year and Joe had our mother live in his home although at that time he was in the hospital with a bleeding problem. Lindsay, Cynthia and I took care of things until I found a person to live in, giving her 24-hour care. Our mother became animated only when Cynthia brought her children. Her response to baby Michael was a joy to observe as she reached for his hand and said repeatedly, "Michael, Michael." She died on February 4, 1989. On March 18, 1989, Mrs. Hagiwara died at the nursing home where she had lived for many years, and Mrs. Kinoshita died on March 24, 1989 following a stroke. So we lost all three of our Issei ladies within two months of one another.

The Ono children have grown, and the grandchildren have gone to college, found jobs and spouses and have children of their own. Yoneo lived in Redding with Vicki, Chuck and Nathan until his death on April 16, 1998. Frances was in a senior residence facility in Fresno until her death on December 29, 2000. Steve married Ellen Rowan and lives in the family home in Fresno. Miyoko is living in Henderson, NV near Las Vegas with husband Robert Moore and children Colin and Kikumi. Joe moved to Hilo to be near son Rod who specializes in internal medicine. Rod, Ardy and their two daughters, Tracy and Mari, have lived in Hilo for quite a few years. Duane lives in Bishop, CA with wife Shirley and children Ben and Matt. Cynthia, husband Jerry Songer and children Christopher, Patricia and Michael moved to Hilo at the time that Joe moved and in 2000 moved to Vancouver, Washington. Lindsay, Marie and their two boys, Nicholas and Joseph, live in Bakersfield. Tomi and Jimmy Monji live in Seal Beach, CA. Gary Monji, Jimmy's son from his first marriage, lives in Newport Beach, with wife Elaine and their musically talented children, Cory and Page. Michael Monji lives in Signal Hill. My husband Frank and I decided to move to Sacramento to be closer to Ken, Lesley and their boys now numbering three, Daniel, Kevin and Jacob. Susanna and husband Richard Alden Minard moved from Washington, D.C. to Bow, New Hampshire near the capital city Concord, and are busy parents of Alden Iritani Minard, born on December 5, 1996. Bonita received her MA from Bryn Mawr College and is in North Carolina where husband Jon Hussey has a research position. Marisa is now in third grade there. Takashi is living at the retirement facility in Bakersfield after having suffered a stroke. His daughter Phoebe is in the Los

Angeles area, somewhere. Alice Kiku Konno Cheng lives in Pacific Palisades with son Robert. Son Clark Cheng, his wife Kristy and their two little daughters, Melissa and Kayley, live in the Southland.

The Ono family moved from Japan to Bakersfield and are now scattered to many areas in this country. Left in Bakersfield are Takashi and Lindsay. We are most grateful to Lindsay and Marie for taking care of Uncle Tak's physical and financial needs. Each week Lindsay transported Tak to and from the Bakersfield Veterans Administration clinic to be bussed to the VA hospital in West Los Angeles for speech therapy and all medical care.

The Ono family began with our parents' marriage in 1924. And now in the new century, we have grown in numbers and areas of interest and professions. My siblings and I are living out our retirement years in ways that our parents would not have imagined. Our father was unable to reach senior status, but he gave to the community until the very end. Our mother lived until she was eighty five and saw not only her children, but her grandchildren and great grandchildren living well. But she still worried. I recall after Duane received his MA in environmental engineering, he took his time locating a position. She worried that he may not find a job. I assume every grandchild can remember being chided by *Obaachan* at some point in their lives.

May we all continue to be productive in our years as our parents had been in theirs.